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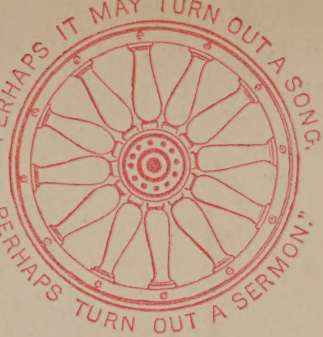

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LEONE.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG ARTISTS.

"COME, Valerio, stop your chattering, and examine my picture. I shall do no more to it."

This was said by a young artist seated before an easel upon which rested the portrait of a very beautiful young woman. He had just given it the last touches, and was now leaning back, palette in hand, earnestly regarding his work. His companion was working carelessly upon a landscape; but turning round, and sitting astride his chair, he kept on "chattering," regardless of his friend's request.

"Nothing like chattering, my dear Silvio: it helps my work," he replied. "That is the

beauty of my profession: I can work and talk at the same time; and, if I do not keep my tongue running, I am lost."

"I, on the contrary, work better in silence. I can concentrate my ideas more closely," observed Silvio.

"Because you paint figures," returned the other; "and you must express ideas, thoughts, conceptions, in them: but for a landscape you have only to sketch from nature, and then copy at will; the eye and hand can do all, without giving your mind to it."

"I may not think as you do," said Silvio in his quiet voice; "but we need not discuss that. Though you do not paint figures, I value your judgment of them very highly."

"Oh! as to that," replied Valerio, who, all quickness and vivacity, presented a strong contrast to his friend, "I do not say it to boast, but I do know a figure from a scarecrow; and that is just the reason why I will not attempt them. Figures require application, study of anatomy, of facial expression, types, characters, and human passions. Such a scatterbrain as I would break down under such a strain in less

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than a month: so I daub canvas with 'fresh woods and pastures new,' and let it go for what it is worth."

"You rate yourself too low, my dear Valerio; for, when you are in the vein, you know you paint admirably. Your landscapes would do honor to any artist, if you would not be so careless, and only half finish your pictures."

"Why should I slave like a dog to produce fine work, when nowadays people buy pictures by the yard, and not by merit?" cried Valerio, who had one of those impulsive Italian natures so easily excited. "They pay me as much for a bad picture as for a good one, — two feet by four, twenty-five scudi; three feet by six, fifty, — so I cover as large a canvas as I can, and let it go."

"O Valerio, what heresy!" exclaimed Silvio, whose noble, inspired face, type of the youthful Raphael, was radiant with love for his art. "If I did not know that your heart is better than your tongue, I should place you among the miserable crowd whose only aim is 'filthy lucre.' The true artist loves Art for her own sake."

"Hold on, hold on! about art for the love of it," cried Valerio with animation. "It is all very well for you, who have a banker at your command to furnish all the money you want; but for a poor devil like me, with my aged parents to support, I assure you, money is my principal object and chief stimulus to labor. If I were like you, instead of working so hard on figures, groups, portraits, and battle-pieces, I should be roaming all over the world, crossing every ocean, — one day on the summit of the Alps, another on the plains of France, ascending the ruin-crowned Rhine, descending the dark Danube; I would visit the stormy shores of the Baltic, the Pyramids on the banks of the Nile; I would cross the Atlantic, and behold Nature in her primeval freshness among the forests of the North, the plains of the West, down the Mississippi, up the Amazon; I would penetrate to the very heart of the Andes." He was continuing to hold forth in a mock oratorical manner, waving his palette in his left hand, and brandishing his brush in his right, as if pointing out the different places as he mentioned them. He stopped short in his

harangue, however, arrested by the pallor and depression that shadowed his friend's face, as he sat silent and dejected, making no effort to stop the flow of Valerio's eloquence. Throwing brush and palette upon a chair, he ran to Silvio, and, laying his hands affectionately upon his shoulders, said, "What is the matter, my dear fellow? Why are you so sad?" Then, striking his forehead, he cried in a tone of remorse, "Oh, how abominably thoughtless I am! Forgive me, my dear Silvio: I know that you never like any allusion made to your banker. Forgive me: I ought to have remembered. I know it always makes you low-spirited: do pardon me, my friend."

Silvio rose, and, taking both hands of his friend, said gently, "No more excuses, dear Valerio: I know that you would never hurt my feelings intentionally. We have not been friends from childhood for nothing."

"Indeed we have not, and I have always respected your secret about your banker. It was quite by accident" —

"Secret!" interrupted Silvio. "If there had been a secret, I should already have con-

fided it to you. But I have no secret: I am as much in the dark as you."

"What! No secret!" exclaimed Valerio in amazement. "Then, what are your relations with him, if I may be allowed the question?"

"Purely of a business nature. Whenever I need money, I go to him, and he furnishes me with any sum I ask, on my signing a receipt for it."

Valerio, at this assertion, opened his black eyes to their fullest extent, crying, "Wonderful banker! Extraordinary banker! The very paragon of bankers! And it makes you despondent to have such an unheard-of banker at your service! For my part, I wish I had half a dozen."

"You would be as unhappy as I am, if you knew nothing of the source of these funds, and would be as unwilling to use them as I have become since I grew old enough to consider."

"Pooh, nonsense! Indeed I would not," retorted Valerio. "When I am thirsty, and come across a cool, shady brook of living water to drink from, I do not worry about its source."

"Ah, Valerio! Your images are always of

Arcadian life, of brooks and flowery fields, of nymphs and satyrs, the innocent, golden age of Nature, when sylvan gods and lovely shepherdesses wooed in shady nooks and leafy bowers. But we live in a wicked, corrupt world, where at every step you may stumble on a crime." Here Silvio dropped his voice almost to a whisper, and added with intense feeling, "Who furnishes this money? What right have I to it? Who am I?"

His friend hardly allowed him to finish speaking, but broke forth with, "Who are you? Why, one of the noblest men ever created. Have I shared your room while we were boys at college, students at the academy, artists in our studio, not to know what a loving soul, a fine intellect, a kind friend, an honest man, a brave artist, you are?" So saying, he clasped Silvio in his arms with a spontaneous movement of affection and enthusiasm, prompted by his ardent, lofty nature.

"If that is enough for you, generous friend, it is not enough for the world — it is not enough for *me*," returned Silvio with deep emotion.

"Pooh, nonsense!" rejoined Valerio, resuming his wonted cheerfulness. "Drive away these gloomy thoughts. Let the obscure past take care of itself. Live for art and the future. Nature has endowed you with the vital spark of genius, which she denies to millions. Be thankful for that, and ask no more. Why dive into mysteries which you cannot solve, and which, if solved, might become sources of misery? Let us speak no more of it; and forgive my carelessness, which started a subject that should be sacred between us. Come, let me see your picture."

Silvio stepped aside, and Valerio stood gazing at it with the enthusiastic admiration which appreciative natures feel when in the presence of a creation of genius. He remained silent a long time; then, turning to his friend, he said, —

"It is worthy of Guido Reni, my dear fellow. How wonderfully beautiful! What softness, what delicacy! But why that cloud of melancholy in her expression? Yet — wait" — and he examined the picture still more attentively, then resumed, smiling, "Why, Silvio! did you use the looking-glass for a model? It is your

own face idealized. It might be the portrait of your sister, if you had one. Is it a portrait, or a fancy of your own?"

"A mere copy of an ideal that has been haunting me," replied Silvio.

"I see that it is an ideal, for no such angelic creature ever graced this earth. Well done, Silvio, well done. It is your masterpiece, and will surely place you at the head of our profession."

"You are too partial, Valerio, too enthusiastic."

"Not on a question of art, I assure you. I would not have said so, if it were not my honest conviction," replied Valerio; then, glancing at his watch, he added hurriedly, "Why, it's twelve o'clock! and I must be off for my lesson to the fair American."

"Don't forget to give her my best regards."

"Love, you mean. I will remember," said Valerio with a smile full of meaning.

"Don't be foolish, Valerio. You know I have no such thought. Moreover, you pay her far more attention than I do."

"I did until I saw that she preferred you.

So I stopped short at friendship, and now we talk and laugh, and are as merry as crickets; but I resign her to you for the softer sentiments."

"You rattlepate!" remonstrated Silvio in a reproachful tone. "You know perfectly well that there can never be any thing between us. There is a barrier too strong ever to be broken through."

"Oh, nonsense! Don't talk so. If you cannot break through it, Love will lend you his light wings to fly over it, were it as high as the Alps. Good-morning. Meet us on the Pincio, for we are going there to sketch."

He changed his coat, looked into a dusty glass to adjust his cravat, took a cane, and left the room. At the foot of the stairs he met a venerable Capuchin father coming up. "Father Francesco!" he exclaimed, kissing his rosary.

"The peace of the Lord be with you," replied the friar in a winning tone. "Where are you going in such a hurry?"

"Oh! I have a lesson to give; but I am very glad you have come, Silvio is so low-spirited. Do cheer him up while I am gone." And kissing his beads again, he hurried off.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAPUCHIN FATHER.

FATHER FRANCESCO was one of those venerable monks whose type is fast disappearing from Italy. His face reminded one of the head of the Moses of Michael Angelo. His beard, white as snow, fell to a great length over his breast. He had a broad, high forehead, an aquiline nose, a mouth retaining still the fresh coloring of youth and an expression of singular sweetness. His hands and bare sandalled feet were unusually white, his movements slow and dignified, contrasting strongly with the coarse maroon-colored tunic, and girdle of white cord, whence depended the long rosary of rough wooden beads. He made a picture worthy of the pencil of a Raphael, as he slowly ascended the stairs, and stood for a moment on the threshold of the young artist's studio, before saying, in a gentle voice, "*Deo gratias.*"

Silvio, who had reseated himself thoughtfully before the portrait, started up, and ran towards him as a child would to his mother, seizing his rosary to kiss; but the monk prevented him, raising him from his bending posture, and embraced him tenderly, saying, —

"What now, my son? How goes it with you? Your last letter gave me a great deal of anxiety, and I hastened my usual visit to Rome on purpose to see you. What has happened?"

"Oh! nothing outwardly; but I wanted so much to see you, to speak to you, to ask your advice. But first sit down, and tell me how you are."

He closed the door, seated the venerable man in a straw arm-chair, and, drawing forward a low stool, sat down close beside him, looking up affectionately into his face.

"I am very well for my age, thank God; but tell me about yourself. Why were you so anxious to see me?"

"Ah, father! for the last month or two my mind has been harassed by dreadful fancies," replied the youth, coloring

"Drive them away as evil temptations, my son."

"Oh, if I only could!" cried Silvio; then, as if carried away by his feelings, and glad to be able to unburden his heart to one whom he so loved and revered, he continued with agitation, "Father Francesco, the darkness that envelops my past life has of late weighed heavily upon my spirit. I can recall only your benevolent face appearing to me at school, at the Academy, in my studio, watching over my education, my welfare, ever kind, ever loving, but with never a word that could dispel the mystery. I have dutifully respected your secrets; but now the time has come when my prospects in life, my fame, my future happiness, depend on the knowledge that you alone possess. Look at my paintings. There they hang; for I dare not exhibit them at the Academy, though every one says they are worthy of a place there."

"And why not, my son?"

At this question, the young man looked up, respectfully but somewhat reproachfully, at Father Francesco, as he slowly replied in a lower tone, —

"Do *you* ask me why? By what name shall I sign them?"

The pious monk calmly returned his imploring gaze, and, resting his hand gently on his head, replied, —

"Silvio. Is not Silvio a good name for an artist? It was after mature deliberation that I chose for you this profession, in which you already excel, and promise to rival the old masters. Art needs no genealogy. The world says Raphael, Guido, Michael Angelo, Titian; and that suffices. Work, my son; imitate their example; be a great artist and a good man; and Silvio will be a name praised, admired, revered, by all who love worth and genius."

The young man shook his head doubtfully, saying, "Ah, Father Francesco! your benevolent heart inspires your head; and you always find words to quiet my restless spirit, and arouse better aspirations. But if fame can excite my ambition, it can never satisfy my heart. The world may admire the artist, but will avoid the man; for it is not enough to say I am honest, virtuous, intelligent, inspired by genius, if a cloud hangs over my birth. Men will sneer" —

At this point the aged monk checked his growing excitement by a gentle touch, and with a sympathizing voice interrupted him.

"Be patient and humble, my son. Bear with firmness both the good and the evil which may befall you. Had it been in my power to relieve your mind, I would have done so long ago. But I am a servant of the Lord's poor: my duty requires me to assist them in their misfortunes, without inquiring too closely into their causes; and thanks be unto Him, that, with His assistance, I have been able to do so."

"Indeed you have, my benefactor!" exclaimed Silvio, repenting his impatience — "indeed you have. I owe to you all that I am, — to your paternal care, to your advice, to your good example."

"Not to me alone, my son; for I am only a humble instrument in the hands of others," replied the monk, unwilling to take credit that did not belong to him.

"Who, who? The banker?" inquired Silvio anxiously.

"Oh, no! not he. He is merely a business agent."

"Who is it, then?" cried Silvio, his tone rising almost to imperiousness as he asked the question. But as he met the calm eyes and compassionate expression of the venerable old man, he checked his impetuosity, and implored, "O Father Francesco, by the love you have borne me from my infancy, by the filial affection with which I have returned it, tell me, I beseech you, tell me!"

Father Francesco sat tenderly regarding the slender youth, whose delicately cut features and long chestnut hair reminded the observer of Leonardo's St. John, and, gently smoothing his ruffled locks with his soft white hand, spoke slowly and gravely: —

"Calm yourself, my son: you know well that what has been revealed to us under the seal of confession is buried in our bosoms as in the grave. Ask no more." Then in a lighter tone, as if to change the conversation, he added, "But why so anxious about yourself all of a sudden? You never showed much concern about it before."

Silvio, at this question, rose from his low seat, retreated a step, and, facing the good

father with almost the look and attitude of an *improvisatore*, replied, —

"Because a new sensation has been awakened within me, a new dawn has opened on the dark horizon of my existence, the rays of a new sun have penetrated to the dormant faculties of my soul, and awakened me to a new life. Until now I have worshipped only Art, and to her Silvio was all-sufficient; but will Silvio be enough for the living realization of my ideal?"

Father Francesco sat watching as the changing expressions chased each other over the young man's face. At first he seemed serious and concerned, but at these last words a genial smile lit up his face. He rose from his chair, threw his arms round him, saying, —

"Why, Silvio, you in love! Well, well, poor boy! I understand you now, and feel for you deeply. It would have been better if you had entered the monastery, as I first proposed; but you had no vocation for it, and I did not insist. Now what I might have expected has happened: you are in love, and naturally fear that the unknown past will be an obstacle in your way."

Then, after a long pause of deep thought, he resumed, "Do not despair: I am going back to Sonnino in a day or two, and you had better come to me there as soon as you can. The mountain air will do you good; and who knows but that I may be able to arrange something in regard to this matter?"

"At Sonnino?" repeated Silvio with great surprise, unable to imagine what possible connection he could have with that isolated mountain village. But Father Francesco, seeing the direction of his thoughts, somewhat dryly replied, —

"Why, yes! the quiet of the convent life will soothe your excitement, and steady your brain. Come, no more of this: what have you been painting lately?"

"This is my last work: I have just finished it," said Silvio, pointing to the picture on the easel, and drawing the shades so as to throw the proper light upon it.

Father Francesco examined it with much interest, and with the eye of a *connoisseur*, then said approvingly, —

"Beautiful, Silvio, beautiful! a masterpiece!

Is it a portrait, or an ideal for a Madonna? But if a Madonna," he added in a moment or two, "you have shown a vanity unworthy of you. You have painted your own features softened into a woman's face."

"No, no! Father Francesco. I must not deceive you. It is not an ideal face: it is a life-size portrait, enlarged from this miniature that has always hung round my neck." He took a locket from his bosom, and handed it to Father Francesco. The monk opened it, and, while comparing it with the portrait, observed, —

"Oh, yes! I remember now. You had it on when you were intrusted to my care. Your copy is very accurate, a perfect likeness. You have succeeded admirably, my dear Silvio, admirably; only you have given her a sadder expression than in the original."

While the father was speaking, Silvio watched him earnestly, then, bending towards him, asked eagerly, —

"Was she truly my mother?"

Not a muscle of Father Francesco's face changed as he calmly replied, —

"I have told you so often. Besides, your likeness to her is sufficient to remove every doubt from your mind."

And he returned the miniature. Silvio pressed it to his lips, exclaiming, "O mother, mother! Why did I never know you?"

Father Francesco rested one hand on the youth's shoulder, and, bending over him until his long white beard blended with the young painter's bright curls, said with tender sympathy, —

"Remember that many lose their mothers in childhood. Grieve not, for she is in heaven among the blessed. Pay her the tribute of love you owe by reproducing her dear face, invested with the halo with which genius immortalizes its subjects."

While they were thus standing before the easel gazing at the picture, the door, which was behind them, opened noiselessly, and a strange-looking man, standing for a moment on the threshold as they were speaking, stepped forward softly, and looked over their shoulders at the portrait. The sight of it seemed to startle him terribly; and an irrepressible exclamation,

"Ah, Silvia!" escaped his lips. Engrossed as they were, the cry, though quickly suppressed, reached their ears; and turning, they found themselves face to face with a model.

CHAPTER III.

THE MODEL.

FATHER FRANCESCO was the first to speak. He exclaimed in a voice of extreme astonishment, "What! You here!"

Silvio, however, who had also turned, recognized the intruder, and said carelessly, —

"Why, is that you, Antonio? Where the deuce did you drop from?" Then, noticing Father Francesco's amazement, he said to him, "You know Antonio, it seems. He is my favorite model. I have painted him in every imaginable character."

"Antonio! model!" repeated Father Francesco almost mechanically. Then a rapid interchange of glances passed between him and the model, who hastily interrupted him, saying, —

"Why not? Do I not make a good model? When work is scarce in our mountains, I come to the city, and earn something this way."

Italians, especially those of the southern provinces, have a peculiar faculty of speaking by almost imperceptible glances. Any one acquainted with that faculty, which they have reduced almost to a science, would have understood Father Francesco to say, with that single flash of his eyes, "Do you dare to come to the city?" and Antonio to reply, "Hush! Fear not for me;" and all so quickly done, that Silvio, though an Italian himself, having no cause to suspect any secrets between the two, did not perceive it. Father Francesco, after this silent recognition, turned to the artist, and in a quiet, indifferent manner, said, —

"I was surprised to see Antonio here. He belongs in our neighborhood; but I was not aware that he came to town as a model."

"Oh, yes!" replied Silvio. "I have known him ever so long. And a splendid model he is. Look at him." So saying, he seized Antonio by the arm, and turned him round and round before Father Francesco, praising every detail of his figure, and the artistic arrangement of his peasant dress, much to the inward astonishment of the good monk, who wondered that

Antonio allowed himself to be so unceremoniously handled.

The admiration of the young artist was not undeserved, for Antonio was indeed a specimen of the finest type of the Roman *contadini*, as he appeared then; for models have the same privilege as actors, and make themselves up for the characters they are meant to represent. He had an oval face, a complexion bronzed by the Italian sun, an aquiline nose, piercing black eyes, and a black beard slightly tinged with gray, but intentionally rough and tangled, as if no comb or brush had touched it for weeks. His hair, evidently a wig, was very black, long, and hung in a mass of tight ringlets. He was dressed in the traditional *contadino* costume: the olive jacket with its small brass buttons, the red vest, coarse shirt, blue leggings, and sheepskin coverings strapped on his feet, giving facility in climbing steep rocks, and treading the pavements as noiselessly as if shod with velvet. He had not, however, the hard hands of a laborer; and through a slight opening in his shirt one could perceive under-linen, very white, and of a much finer quality than such people generally wear.

After Silvio had finished his exhibition to Father Francesco, he resumed, "Well, what do you think of him? Is he not a fine model? Though he is very uncertain; for he is here for a few days, and then we do not see him for months. But he is very faithful to me, coming always to my studio when he is in town."

"You are so good and generous," insinuated Antonio.

Silvio, not to be outdone in courtesy, returned, "And you are so patient and good-natured, — standing for hours in one position while I sketch. But I am sorry I have nothing for you just now, for I have been painting a female figure. Look at it, Antonio. What do you think of it?"

Antonio needed no invitation; for, ever since he had been in the room, his eyes had eagerly turned to the picture whenever he had had an opportunity. At this question, he replied involuntarily, with suppressed agitation, "Wonderful! Wonderful likeness!"

Silvio started in astonishment, crying, "Likeness? To whom? Have you ever seen the original?"

But Antonio had recovered his self-possession, and replied, "Oh, no! I meant — likeness — to yourself. It resembles you so strongly: it is your own image. It must be a sister of yours, eh?"

"No, Antonio. It is the portrait of my mother, which I have copied from a miniature."

"Your mother! Oh, yes! But you are wonderfully like her, — a striking likeness." As he spoke, he glanced alternately at Silvio and at the picture with intense admiration. Then, as if afraid of showing too much interest, he asked carelessly, —

"It is quite finished, isn't it?"

"Yes, quite."

"Then, why don't you begin something new, and employ me? I may stay several days in the city."

"No, Antonio. I have promised to pay Father Francesco a visit at Sonnino."

"At Sonnino?" repeated Antonio, surprised.

"Yes, at Sonnino, at the convent," said Father Francesco.

"At your convent? Then perhaps I may meet you there."

"Very well, Antonio," replied Silvio; "and, if you bring some of your handsome *contadinas*, I may paint a group of you among your native rocks."

"Any thing you like, Signor Silvio: always at your service," ejaculated Antonio, hat in hand, bowing obsequiously.

"Good-by then, *a rivederci*," said Silvio; and, dismissing him, he put a gold napoleon into his hand, which Antonio received with humble thanks.

"Always good, always generous! The Lord reward you!" But as he left the room, he slipped it carelessly into one of his many pockets.

Father Francesco had stood intently watching the two, particularly the model. A cloud of suspicion darkened his broad forehead, and he seemed uneasy and perplexed. When Antonio, after taking leave of Silvio, respectfully kissed his hand to Father Francesco (as is the custom of the *contadini* when they meet an ecclesiastic), another interchange of glances passed between them, Father Francesco intimating, "I must speak to you soon," and Antonio promising compliance.

When he had left them, Silvio, who was far from imagining that there could have been the slightest communication between Father Francesco and the model, resumed the conversation, saying, —

"What a curious old fellow that Antonio is!"

"Have you known him long?"

"Ever so long. He is my best model, though by fits and starts; for he disappears, then comes back; then he is off again. But it is wonderful what artistic expressions he can assume. Once I painted him as a brigand; and he posed himself as if hidden behind a rock, his eyes gleaming wildly, his lips pale, his hand in his breast as if ready to draw a pistol or dagger, and an expression of savage cunning and feline watchfulness, like a tiger ready to spring. Another time I painted him as St. Jerome in his cave at Bethlehem: he knelt a long time on the ground before the stone crucifix, his face assuming such an expression of penitence and sanctity, that I almost fancied tears running down his cheeks. I have that picture still," pointing to it, as it hung high up on the wall under the skylight. "I never saw a man whose face

could express so powerfully the opposite passions of love and hate, tenderness and cruelty, good and evil, as this model, Antonio."

Father Francesco listened thoughtfully to the description given by the young artist; and, unwilling to arouse any suspicion in the mind of his *protégé*, he observed, —

"You must not be surprised at this; for these professional models, by long experience with artists, learn to express human passions as skilfully as actors." Then, looking at his watch in its wooden case (for Capuchins are not allowed to carry gold or silver), he added, "I must go now."

Silvio offered to accompany him to the convent, on his way to the Pincio; but, while he was getting ready, a new interruption occurred. A curious-looking man, after peeping cautiously through a window that looked into the entry, had knocked at the door, and, without waiting for permission, had lifted the latch, and entered the studio. Shutting the door behind him, he advanced, hat in hand, asking with a grin, "Signor Silvio?"

He was dressed in plain but countrified

clothes, such as might be worn by a notary, or even a priest while travelling. But his head, thrown into relief against the dark panel of the door behind him, stood out clear and bold, like a portrait of Rembrandt, challenging attention. His coal-black hair, growing down almost to his eyebrows, was cut close, and stood up like the bristles of a wild boar. His eyes, though small and bloodshot, were as black and piercing as Julius Cæsar's (*nigri et vegeti*). His nose, thin and hooked, like a bird of prey, added to the repulsiveness of the upper part of his face; but the lower part offered a curious contrast. His lips, curved and smiling, displayed the handsomest set of white teeth imaginable; and his small, dimpled chin and fair cheeks, freshly shaved, shone white below his sunburnt cheek-bones and temples.

The two looked with some surprise at this unexpected apparition; and Silvio, in answer to his question, replied, "Yes, sir: I am he."

"No need of asking if you are the painter, for I see the evidence before me," said the man. "Let me explain my errand. I am a resident of St. Germano; and, coming to Rome on some

business, our priest commissioned me to buy a new picture of the Madonna for our church, as the old one is so faded out that it can hardly be seen. Here in Rome I inquired who was the best painter; and they recommended me to come to you, not only because you are the best, but also very reasonable. Now, have you got one ready, as I must return soon?"

"A Madonna? I have none ready to sell; but I might paint you one, if you will tell me what Madonna you want."

"What!" replied the man, as if astonished. "No Madonna ready painted! What is that?" said he, pointing to the picture on the easel.

"That? Why, that is a lady's portrait."

"A portrait! Why would it not answer for a Madonna? Are not the best Madonnas portraits of beautiful women?" As he said this, he cast a sly glance at Father Francesco, as if appealing to him as authority. He, however, took no notice of it, and sat quietly waiting for Silvio, who somewhat impatiently replied, —

"Yes; but this is a private portrait, and not for sale."

"Not for sale! Don't you sell your pictures?" insisted the man.

"Yes; but not this one."

"Not that one! I am sorry; for I have taken a great fancy to it. It would look splendidly in our church. It would attract great crowds; and who knows but those eyes might wink in course of time? They are very handsome eyes. It is just the face to work miracles," with another ineffectual glance at Father Francesco. "What do you say to a thousand francs?"

Here he assumed what he meant for a tempting smile; and he pronounced the words "thousand francs" with a seductive tone of voice, as if he thought there could be no refusal to such an offer. But Silvio was impatient at his pertinacity, and replied curtly, —

"I have told you that it is not for sale. I will paint you a Madonna for that price; but this is a private portrait."

"What if it is a private portrait? You can paint another, or duplicate this. I shouldn't mind if it were a copy of this." He approached the portrait, and, affecting great ad-

miration for it, continued insinuatingly, "What do you say to twelve hundred francs? Come, say yes. I have taken a great fancy to this picture."

Silvio by this time was almost out of temper, for there was something in the man instinctively repugnant to him: so he answered very shortly, —

"Sir, I have said that it is not for sale; and that is enough. I must beg you to excuse me, for I am just going out."

The man looked at Silvio with a peculiarly sarcastic smile, and a half-mocking, half-savage expression, saying slowly, —

"Well, I am sorry you would not sell it, or a copy of it. Twelve hundred francs is a good offer, and not to be sneezed at. But if you won't sell it, there is nothing more to be said; and I must find my Madonna somewhere else. Good-afternoon, signore. — Your blessing, Holy Church!" — the usual way in which country people address a priest or monk of whose name they are ignorant.

Father Francesco bowed in acknowledgment of the salutation. Silvio replied, "Good-after-

noon, sir," and opened the door for the man to go out. He, however, lingered a while, as if interested in the paintings hanging about the studio, but in reality taking a survey of the locality with his lynx eyes. As he passed close to Silvio on his way out, he winked at him, and whispered, so as not to be heard by Father Francesco, —

"Fifteen hundred francs? And I will come for it when the old monk is out of the way."

Silvio, indignant at the insinuation, shut the door in his face with a loud "No, sir!"

The man's eyes glared savagely as the door closed with a bang, and an instinctive impulse carried his hand to his breast. He half turned to raise the latch and enter again, but suddenly checked himself with a cynical laugh, muttering between his teeth, as he descended the stairs, —

"Bah! stupid boy! You have lost fifteen hundred francs, and more if you wanted it. Wouldn't sell it, eh? Ha, ha, ha! Well, you will lose it, that's all. *I* wouldn't give a *sou* for your daub. But *he* said, 'I must have that painting at any price;' and, when *he* says, 'I

must have it,' he will have it, whether you like it or not."

He walked a short distance; and, when he reached the corner of a street that led to the Piazza di Spagna, he stopped, pulled out an old meerschaum pipe, and was about to light it, but hesitated, and put it back, muttering, —

"Oh! I forgot that I must not smoke a pipe when I am dressed like a gentleman. Well, I will smoke a cigar."

He pulled out from another of his numerous pockets a very elegant cigar-case, with a gold monogram surmounted by a coronet upon it. With a supercilious air he took out a cigar, and lighted it at a tobacconist's near by, still displaying the elegant case in his hand, and then wended his way towards the Piazza di Spagna.

Soon after, Father Francesco and Silvio came out of the studio, and took their way to the convent and the Pincio.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAIR YOUNG AMERICAN.

AT the farthest corner of the Pincian Hill, just beyond the ancient wall of Rome, overlooking the Borghese garden, and screened from the public promenade by garden-trees, shrubbery, and flowers, stood our friend Valerio, overlooking and directing a young American girl seated on a camp-stool before a portable easel, sketching the beautiful landscape below. A middle-aged gentleman half-lying on a stone bench near, his head pillowed on a folded shawl, and a cigar in his mouth, evidently her father, and an elderly servant-woman seated at a little distance by the parapet, completed the group.

Mr. Norman, a wealthy American merchant, had early lost his wife; and when his only daughter Edith, whom he idolized, had grown up and developed strong artistic tastes, he

retired from business, and took her to Rome to study. They had been there for several years, and spoke Italian fluently. They lived very quietly and unostentatiously, — she entirely wrapped up in her art, while her father spent his leisure in making up for the deficiencies of his early education.

Edith Norman was a superb specimen of a New-England girl, physically and mentally, having been brought up in one of those suburban homes which combine the healthy life of the country and the elegancies and intellectual advantages of the city, and, though worshipped by her father, was wholly unspoiled. First his playmate, then his companion, his vigorous though somewhat uncultivated intellect and lofty moral standard gave strength and tone to her character without lessening her womanly refinement. Her education had been carefully attended to. She was a good scholar and linguist; and, though she had never been willing to submit to the drudgery of learning music, her ear and taste were cultivated, and she thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed it: but her passion was for art, showing itself even in

childhood, when she drew well before receiving any instruction. Physically, she was of the best type of the American of English descent, — fair complexion, a profusion of light, curly chestnut hair, a low forehead, a small nose (slightly *retroussé*), cherry lips, and deep-blue eyes. Although her features were not strikingly beautiful, they were illuminated by the intelligence, goodness, and quick sympathy which made her the sunshine of all around.

She had been working for some time in silence, only interrupted by an occasional direction from Signor Valerio, which she obeyed without speaking, when Mr. Norman's cigar dropped from his lips, and he started to pick it up, exclaiming, —

"Why, I believe I am falling asleep! How are you getting along, Edith?"

"Very well, papa. I shall be through in a few minutes." Then taking a long, earnest look, to impress upon her memory the details which she wished to transfer to her canvas, she cried with enthusiasm, —

"What a magnificent landscape it is! Can I ever do justice to it?"

Valerio replied encouragingly, —

"I am sure you will. You have a happy faculty of seizing the picturesque points of a view, and work them up rapidly." Then, while Miss Edith was executing some details to which he had called her attention, he approached Mr. Norman, saying, "Is not this a delightful spot?"

"Delightful! That does not half express it. I would call it heavenly, were it not so treacherous; for the beauty of the scene, and the soft, warm temperature, enervate a man. I do not wonder at your Italian *dolce far niente:* who can work in a climate like this? Look at me lying here smoking, like a Neapolitan *lazzarone!* What would my friends at the Exchange say, if they saw me now? — I, who used to be so active."

"Why, papa!" interrupted Edith, "they would say, that, after so many years of work, you were now enjoying the *otium cum dignitate.*"

"Yes, plenty of *otium,* but not much *dignitate,* basking in the sun of Italy on a bench in a public park."

"Not much sun either, Mr. Norman, for it is almost setting," observed Valerio.

"So it is!" exclaimed Mr. Norman, rising. "How time slips by! I must have been dozing."

During this short conversation Edith had from time to time glanced towards the turning of the path leading to the circular road, as if expecting some arrival; and now her face brightened with pleasure, as, through the openings in the high flowery hedges, she caught sight of Silvio slowly approaching. He was cordially greeted as he joined them, though Valerio reproached him for being so late.

"I am very sorry," replied he, "but my guardian kept me longer than I expected."

Mr. Norman proposed to Edith to put by her painting, and walk a while. "In a few moments," she answered. "I am just putting the last touches to my sketch."

"Oh, yes! I know what your few moments are. I am all cramped up, lying on that stone bench, and must stretch myself a little. Come, Signor Valerio, we will take a turn, and be back by the time she is ready."

"But, papa, don't be impatient: I shall be through directly," insisted Edith, who shrunk from being left alone with Silvio. But Mr. Norman, without heeding her, took Valerio's arm, saying with a laugh, "Come with me; for if you stay to encourage her, she will not be through for an hour," and walked off.

The two were left alone, — Edith working steadily at her painting; Silvio sitting on a camp-stool, equally silent, beside her. She waited for him to say something, but poor Silvio dared not open his lips. His conversation with his guardian in the morning had affected him deeply; and now that he was alone with the woman he loved, and from whom he felt more than ever hopelessly severed, a nervous agitation overpowered him, so that he was unable to speak. So they remained for some time, — she intent upon her work; he watching her, apparently calm, though the convulsive clinching of his left hand, which she could not see, indicated the violent emotions which he endeavored to conceal from her.

Edith finally stopped painting, leaned back a little to observe the effect, and broke the silence with the question, —

"What do you think of it, Signor Silvio?"

Her voice was very musical, and her command of Italian perfect; while her slight foreign accent rather added to than detracted from its melody. Silvio felt all its charm; but the appeal to his artistic judgment recalled him to himself, and fixing his mind upon the canvas, where before only his eyes had rested, he replied with an effort, —

"Admirable, Miss Edith, truly admirable!"

"You think so? Then I will not add another touch. Besides, it is growing too dark to work;" and she rose to gather her things together. The maid, who had been half asleep, came forward, and folding the stools, easel, and portfolio, took them, with the paint-box, and departed for their lodgings, leaving the young people alone. They strolled on until they reached the wall overlooking the Borghese gardens, where they stood watching the trees bathed in the golden light of the sun, which was setting behind them, until it gradually faded and disappeared.

Edith had known Silvio and Valerio — as she had many other artists, both native and foreign

— ever since she had been in Rome. The only daughter of a rich man, young, pretty, cultivated, and an enthusiast for art, she had received much attention; and offers of marriage would have poured in upon her like arrows into a target of our modern archery clubs, had she allowed it. But she was one of those women whose feelings, though deep and strong, are under the control of reason and common sense. Feeling it dishonorable to encourage love which she could not return, she employed the bright charm of her manner to parry, without offence, the attacks of her numerous admirers; and by a *bon-mot*, a repartee, or, when too bold, even a quick sarcasm, she quenched their ardor. So, after a while, she was set down by the Italians, who cannot conceive any woman capable of resisting their seductions, as a cold, unimpassioned, white lily of the North; by the foreigners, as a woman whose whole heart was so absorbed by her love of art, and desire of excelling in it, as to leave no room for any other sentiment. All agreed, however, in extolling her real talent and charming social qualities, and treated her with marked consid-

eration. She had chosen Valerio for her teacher, because of his great artistic merit and total absence of pretence: he was poor and somewhat eccentric, but honest and true, while he had the liveliness and simplicity of a boy. His first attempt at gallantry she met so merrily, yet so resolutely, that he understood her friendly earnestness, and never overpassed the bounds then tacitly established. He always kissed her hand when they met; and, on parting, she generally charged him to "be a good boy."

Among all the young Roman artists, one alone had never approached her with that manner which makes a woman feel "This man will make love to me, if I will let him;" and that one was Silvio. Yet she knew that he loved her, and with the deep passion of a high, sensitive, noble nature. That is one of the advantages of women. Nature has endowed them with such delicacy of perception, that *they know* when a man loves them, whether he expresses it or not; while, to protect that delicacy, she has also gifted them with greater powers of concealment, so that the man is always in the

dark. Thus Edith had long known that Silvio loved her: his every look, every gesture, every act, expressed it; while she, though showing great interest in his paintings, and treating him always with sincere friendliness, seemed in his eyes cold and indifferent. He had never painted her portrait; but in his various figures she had detected her blue eyes here, her chestnut hair there, her rosy lips in one, her exquisite complexion in another. But still he had never addressed a word of love to her; and she, though visiting his studio with Valerio to see and admire each new work of his, had never betrayed any sentiment but for his high artistic power. Indeed, this was the first time that they had ever been actually alone together; and their secret consciousness gave peculiar power to the spell of tender sadness cast over them by the deepening twilight.

It was Silvio, finally, who, as if suddenly awakening from a revery, turned to Edith with a hasty movement, and broke the dangerous silence, saying, —

"It is growing dark. Would you like to join the others?"

Edith turned to him somewhat surprised at this unexpected question, and, with a slight tinge of disappointment at his desire to be with the others, replied coldly, —

"You are anxious to be with Signor Valerio."

Silvio, struck by her tone, looked scrutinizingly at her as he answered slowly, "He is my dearest friend."

"Ah!" cried Edith, thrown off her guard; "but not your only one." Whether it was the witchery of the hour and place, the consciousness of being for the first time entirely alone with the only man who had ever attracted her, or a rush of strong emotion, her wonted reserve and self-control failed her for the moment, and her tone and look were so soft and tender, that to Silvio they were a revelation. He seized her hand, and with a quick impulse seemed about to open his whole heart to her, but suddenly, as if checked by some inward monitor, drew back with a deep sigh, slowly, lingeringly, loosed his hold, and replied with forced calmness, —

"No, I have my guardian, — Father Francesco."

Edith had watched him keenly, and noticed with great surprise this sudden change. Many suspicions crossed her mind. Certain as she was of his present affection, the only explanation she could imagine of his strange manner — some previous love-affair which fettered him — struck her painfully. Summoning all her pride and self-control, she said in a tone of mere friendly interest, —

"Ah! that good old monk whom I have met occasionally in your studio? I liked him very much, he seemed so good and kind. Is he a relative of yours?"

"No, only my guardian. I was left in his charge when I was an infant."

"Then you, like myself, never had the tender care of a mother," said Edith with heartfelt sympathy.

"Nor of a father either: I was left an orphan. As far as I know, I have no living relative."

"Excuse me," said Edith with a smile: "I did not mean to be inquisitive, although I am an American; but my father and I feel a deep interest in you, you are so different from most artists, — not only talented, but modest, amiable" —

"And wretched."

"Yes; but why? Why are you not happy?"

"Happy!" repeated Silvio with a wistful look. "No, I never was, and fear I never shall be!"

Whenever a man makes such an avowal to a woman, she unhesitatingly refers it to hopeless love, whether for herself or for some one else; and Edith was no exception to her sex. She concluded, therefore, that it was Silvio's love that made him so despondent; and if, as she had felt so sure, she herself was the object of his affection, why, a word from her could dispel his gloom, but his constrained manner had made that word hard to speak. She expostulated with him, saying, —

"You have no right to say that. You are young, and rank already among the first artists in Rome. A future opens before you that many covet, but that you can certainly reach. Every one who knows you pays tribute to your genius. What can you desire more?"

Silvio listened sadly to the praises of the enthusiastic girl, while his grief was deepened by his new realization of the love that uncon-

sciously prompted them. He remained silent, and she continued, —

"Why do you not speak? This is some new trouble that is weighing upon you. What is it? Will you not tell me? Do you mistrust me?"

"Mistrust you! Edith, my" — Again he checked the passionate impulse that had almost mastered him, and turned away, saying with deep emotion, "You know not what you ask. Forgive me, and question me no further."

But this virtual acknowledgment of some secret grief, some mystery, only increased her interest; and, feeling confident of her power to give him comfort, she replied, —

"I cannot stand quietly by when you are in trouble. You never had a sister, nor I a brother: look upon me as a sister, and confide in me. I may be able to dispel your sorrow. Tell me why you are so sad."

"Telling it would not relieve it. You could only pity, not cure me. No human power can uproot it from my heart."

These words convinced Edith that her first vague suspicion of a previous love had fallen even short of the truth. How could she so

have deceived herself? She turned pale, and faltered, "Your heart? Is it, then, love?"

The question seemed to startle Silvio, and carry him beyond all those considerations that had hitherto held him in check. Lifting his head proudly, and tossing back his long hair, he fixed his burning eyes upon her, exclaiming, —

"Love! I have not dared to say it, even to myself. Art has hitherto been my only love. A Madonna of Raphael, a face of Guido, a portrait of Titian, some ideal of my own, — these have been my only loves. But I have shunned the realization of such ideals, for it could only have added to my wretchedness the misery of a love necessarily hopeless. And yet I feel that I could love with all the passion of my soul. Nay, I do love — it is useless to try and disguise it — I do love." He seized Edith's hands almost violently, as she stood half frightened by his sudden burst of passion; and bending towards her till their faces almost met, his brilliant eyes softening and glowing, he continued, —

"Edith, from the first moment that I beheld

your angelic face, my artistic loves vanished before the spell of your living fascination. I have struggled, but in vain: your presence has invaded my whole being. The ideal which I had formed in my mind and enshrined in my heart I found realized in you; and now you sit there enthroned as the Madonna of my sanctuary. Love! Love does not express the thousandth part of my feeling: it is adoration, worship, infatuation. When Beato Angelico, in the quiet of his cell, painted his immortal cherubim, — wonderful creations of purity and beauty, — little did he think that Nature could embody them, and endow them with soul, sentiment, goodness, lofty intellect, enthusiasm, and love. Edith, I found in you the realization of Beato Angelico's ideal, and I have loved you from the first moment I beheld you."

Edith had stood as if spell-bound, watching the various emotions as they betrayed themselves on Silvio's expressive face. As he spoke, all suspicion of another or previous love was totally dispelled; and she felt that Silvio had never loved before, and that she was all in all to him.

Women of Edith's temperament, who have been accustomed to the society of gentlemen, and to be surrounded with admirers, learn to repel easily any unwelcome advances; so easily, indeed, as often to acquire the reputation of heartlessness. But let a true sentiment penetrate the outer coldness that a high sense of honor, propriety, and self-respect imposes, and their hearts respond the more warmly for the previous repression. Edith, once thoroughly convinced of Silvio's love, expressed neither doubt, mistrust, nor hesitation in accepting the avowal. Though blushing deeply, she would not hide her face from him, but met his passionate gaze with her clear, tender eyes, as she said, —

"Silvio, was it the fear that your love might not be returned which made you so unhappy? How could you think so? Any woman might be proud to win the love of one like you. We Northern races are not so demonstrative as you Italians; but our love is as deep, as true, and as lasting. Was I not right in thinking I could cure your melancholy? Silvio, does it not dispel your sadness when I say, 'I love you in return'?"

She spoke softly, tenderly, but with all the sincerity and frankness of a noble-hearted woman; and a gleam of archness pointed the last few words, as she looked up into the noble face bending over her. Silvio seemed bewildered, hardly able to realize the full force of her avowal. He watched her angelic face as if in a trance; then, slowly bending lower, like a worshipper approaching a saint, he reverently impressed upon her forehead the first kiss of love.

CHAPTER V.

LEONE.

THE morning after the event narrated in the last chapter two men emerged from a large hostelry near one of the city gates, — the resort of people from the country with their horses. One was the country-fellow who had vainly bargained for Silvio's picture: the other was Antonio, the model, but very differently dressed in a modest suit of brown, a blue cloak thrown over his shoulder, and a broad-brimmed black hat caught up, artist fashion, at one side. Great as was the change made by his dress, his head had undergone such transfigurement, that no one would have recognized it as that of the model of the previous day. His beard, carefully smoothed, was now glossy black, slightly sprinkled with gray; his hair cut short in military style, and much grayer than his beard; his mustache waxed and pointed

His carriage was stern and imposing, as of one born to command. They walked slowly and in deep conversation, Antonio evidently giving particular instructions to his companion, who received them with an air of great submission. When they reached the door of the Capuchin convent, Antonio said, as if summing up his instructions, —

"Now, Maso, be cautious and on the alert. Get two or three men, no more, and take away the picture this evening while the young men are out. Here is the money which you are to leave on the easel," handing him a purse; "and here is enough for the men you employ," giving him several gold pieces. "At ten o'clock let every thing be ready for our departure." So saying, he motioned him to be off, and entered the convent gate.

Maso replied, "Yes, captain," as Antonio disappeared, then stood a while gazing at the purse of gold, then turning over the gold pieces in his other hand. Finally he put both into his pocket, took out his coronetted cigar-case, selected and lighted a cigar, and walked off gesticulating and muttering as if his mind was

deeply disturbed. His thoughts, if put into speech, would have run somewhat as follows:—

"Two thousand francs for a daub of a Madonna! Surely our captain has lost his wits. And five hundred for me to hire friends to steal it to-night! Steal a picture in the heart of the city, where the police are as thick as flies, at the risk of getting us all into the galleys, and then leave two thousand francs for it! It is the most extraordinary piece of business our captain ever put me to. I wonder if it is a miraculous Madonna, and he has some scruples about taking it! The idea of our having any scruples! Still, he goes very often to that old prior. I wonder if the old monk is trying to convert him! That would be serious. Why so? Couldn't we get along without him? Indeed, he has acted very strangely of late, going in and out of the city at great risk; and not a single job has been accomplished for some time. I must consult Pietraccio about it. Why couldn't Pietraccio take his place? I could rule him so easily; while, with the captain, there is nothing for it but to obey. Ugh, I must think seriously about it."

Thus cogitating, he arrived at a low tavern, which he entered, and was soon after joined by some very suspicious looking men, who sat down to an excellent dinner with him, talking earnestly together in a low tone; and there we leave him.

Antonio, meanwhile, had ascended the marble staircase of the convent, and knocked at the door of Father Francesco's cell. The father was expecting him, and, opening the door for him to enter, closed it carefully behind him, and they stood face to face.

"Father Francesco, I am here at your summons."

The monk gave him a chair beside a little table upon which stood a crucifix and a few religious books. He seated himself in an old high-backed leathern arm-chair, and said in a gentle tone, —

"Leone," — for that was his real name, by which we also shall henceforth call him, — "a very serious matter induced me to ask this interview, — Silvio's welfare."

At the mention of Silvio's name, Leone's haughty and almost savage expression suddenly

relaxed; and he replied with anxious interest, —

"Silvio? What can I do for him? My wealth, my life, are at his disposal."

Father Francesco, long accustomed to the exaggerated expressions of Southern natures, replied with a smile, "Neither of these, but peace of mind, is what he wants; and you alone can give it to him."

"I?" said Leone with surprise.

"Yes, you, and you alone."

"I do not understand you."

Father Francesco drew his chair a little closer, and, bending earnestly towards his companion, said in a low but penetrating voice, "Leone, do you remember the day you brought that boy to me?"

Leone's stern features seemed suddenly to soften at this question. He sat silent, thoughtful, for a while, then, almost as if speaking to himself, he said, "Remember? Yes, as if it were yesterday. You were sitting in the confessional, and I approached as if with the intention of confessing. I told you who I was; that surprised you: then I stated that I did

not come for confession, but to beg you to take charge of a child whom I desired to have brought up away from the life I was leading. You refused at first, but finally consented."

"Yes; but you remember the conditions. You promised to relinquish all claim to him, and never to reveal what relationship there might be between you."

"True. Have I not kept them? I placed sufficient sums in your hands, through a banker, for his support and education, and left all the rest to you."

"But you never explained to me who the child was, nor what was your relationship. You only asked me to call him Silvio."

"I had my reasons," replied Leone curtly.

"But this revelation is now necessary. Silvio is in love; but how can he hope to marry while his parentage is unknown?"

"Silvio in love!" exclaimed Leone with surprise. "What obstacle can there be to his marriage? Money? I can settle a fortune on him, if necessary."

At this assertion Father Francesco stared at him with amazement; then, drawing himself up with dignity, he said in a severe tone, —

"Leone, your life in the mountains has so blunted your moral sense that you imagine money can do every thing. And what money? The proceeds of a life of crime."

Leone's eyes flashed angrily; but, as they met the solemn, steadfast gaze of the venerable monk, they wavered and fell before it, while Father Francesco continued, "Nay, start not. I must speak as my duty and conscience dictate. Leone, yours is ill-gotten gold. Restore it to its rightful owners; or, if that is impossible, give it in charity, clothe yourself in sackcloth, and ask forgiveness from the mercy of God, for your manifold sins" —

Leone started to his feet, grasping convulsively the back of his chair. His expression grew bold and defiant, though without any irritation at the good monk's accusations and reproofs, and he haughtily exclaimed, —

"Enough, Father Francesco! I will come to confession and repentance when I feel disposed. I am here now only to speak of Silvio. As to repentance, I may yet repent, but not of the sins with which you charge me. I am a brigand, not a robber," he cried, with a fierce

toss of his head. Then, as if carried away by emotion, he continued with vehemence, "Society has cast me out of its pale, declared war against me; and I have accepted the challenge. I attack society, not individuals. Have you ever heard of my robbing a wayfarer, an orphan, or a widow? That member of my band who once dared to rob a poor peddler of his hard-earned money was found the next morning hanging on the tree beneath which he committed the crime.[1] This is brigands' justice. But Government is at war with me, and I claim the rights of war against it. The rich landowners of the Campania I tax, and they pay readily. Why not? Who protects them and their property? The Government? If they had to rely upon that, they would never reap a sheaf of wheat out of their vast estates. But I am king of the mountains, and whoever pays tribute to me is assured both of life and property. Who would dare to molest them while they are under my protection?" And no king born to the purple, and seated on his throne, could have surpassed his regal air, as he thus

[1] Historical.

vindicated himself; while Father Francesco thought sadly, "What a strong nature, but how warped and led astray!" Leone, after a slight pause, resumed, —

"And who does more good with the money than I? Has a poor man ever yet applied to me for assistance, and returned empty-handed? Did I not distribute a bag of wheat to every poor family in your village on the occasion of my sister's marriage? Did I not pay for the new organ in your church, though you knew not at the time whence the money came?" [1]

"Yes, indeed," assented Father Francesco. "And I would not have accepted it if I had known. But no more of this. Let us return to Silvio. What relation is he to you?"

Leone's brow contracted, as if from some painful recollection. Then he said slowly but firmly, —

"Father Francesco, do you not remember our agreement?"

"Yes. You were never to reveal to *him* whatever connection or relationship there may be between you. But now the time has come

[1] Historical.

when I feel it my duty to require you to reveal it to *me.* I know you love Silvio dearly, and it is in his interest I ask the question." Then in a low tone, and with a look of keen scrutiny, he added, "Is he your son?"

An expression of deep mental agony convulsed Leone's face as the monk spoke; but, fierce and wild as it was, it softened with strange tenderness as he cried, —

"Love Silvio dearly! Father Francesco, you, who have lived a tranquil life in the quietude of a cloister, know not the force of human passions. Love Silvio, you say?" Then, with the almost Oriental exaggeration common to the people of Southern Italy, he continued, "I would kiss the earth under his feet. I would worship him as one does the blessed Madonna; for his face is the image of one whose memory is the only link that still binds me to what is noble and good." Here a sudden look of ferocity drove the tenderness from his face, his voice came with a hiss through his clinched teeth, and, as if absorbed in bitter memories and unconscious of Father Francesco's presence, he continued unsteadily, —

"And yet — my dagger's point was only an inch from his heart — there he lay, — a child in his innocent sleep. The bleeding body struggled beside him in the agonies of death — his little hand wet with the warm blood — He woke — he opened his eyes — oh, those angelic eyes! — Silvia's eyes — my Silvia! — I could not strike — a cold shudder ran through my veins, — I who had never known fear. I seized the child — fought my way through the crowd, who tried to oppose me — I was free — among my own — on my mountains where I am king. Love that child! Ah! he is a man now; but to me he is still the child whose lovely eyes saved me from the remorse of shedding innocent blood. I have watched him from year to year: his progress has been my pride. I have cherished the hope that in time he might love me, his savior, his benefactor. Oh, what would I not give for his love!"

During this passionate outburst, Father Francesco had sat awe-struck at its vehemence, watching the various emotions that chased each other across Leone's excited face, and moved by a fervor of charity and compassion,

which he had never before felt towards a man whom he had considered a hardened criminal. He rose; and, going over to where Leone had thrown himself upon his chair, he bent over him, gently touched him, and whispered soothingly, "I could assure you of it, if you would only abandon the sinful life you are leading."

"Abandon my life!" answered Leone hastily. "That is impossible now. But, ah! let him never know it. Let him never know me, if that knowledge would give him pain. I wish him to be happy. He must be happy. My wealth is his, my dying prayer will be for his happiness."

Father Francesco still stood beside him, gently pressing his hand, and earnestly repeated his question, —

"Is he your son?"

"Ask me not. He is dearer to me than a son. Ah! would he ever call me father? No, no: that can never be! Between him and me yawns an untimely grave — the skeleton hands of a traitor hold us apart — yet I love him, — love him as I did" —

He had almost pronounced a name; but that

name probably recalled him to himself, and checked his returning excitement. He sprang up, and, staring wildly and somewhat reproachfully at the monk, exclaimed, —

"What was I saying? Ah! Father Francesco, you have evoked the dead from their graves. They rise before me now, but they will not accuse me before the judgment-seat in the Last Day. I have sinned before God; but that child, my Silvio, will plead for me in atonement for my *vendetta*."

He rushed toward the door. Father Francesco caught his hand, and tried to calm him; but he drew it away hastily, crying, —

"Ask me no further: I am in no mood for speech. I will meet you in your convent on our mountains. Farewell!" and he rushed away, shutting the door violently after him.

Father Francesco returned slowly to his chair, greatly moved, thinking to himself, "Mysterious man! Strong, impulsive nature, capable of great virtues, but also of great crimes! Why will he not reveal his history to me? Is Silvio his son? But if so, why not acknowledge it? He spoke of a *vendetta*." At this thought

he shook his head sorrowfully. "Oh, thou bane of our country, how many generous souls hast thou not brought to crime and misery! Could he have murdered Silvio's mother through jealousy? Who was the bleeding body lying beside the child? It could not be she, for he seemed to feel no remorse for that deed. What a mystery it is! Who could suspect so much tenderness in a man who is the terror of the whole country! What a mystery, what a mystery!" And he sat for a long time lost in thought.

CHAPTER VI.

DREAMS AND FOREBODINGS.

EDITH had lain all night, half awake, half asleep, in a tender, sweet, blissful revery. Whoever has truly felt the ecstasy of a first love can realize her feelings: to those who have not, no description can give the remotest conception of them; wherefore, then, attempt it? What words can portray the succession of lovely pictures that presented themselves to her exalted imagination? — Silvio's face, a type of refined, poetic, but manly beauty, irradiated with the halo of genius; Silvio's artistic works, uniting the finish of the Renaissance with the lofty conceptions of the earlier masters; Silvio's earnest, enthusiastic love for art and love for her, expressed in a thousand ways. Her inborn love of the beauties of nature, strengthened and developed by her artistic training, brought readily before her mind a lovely wood-

land scene, — a picturesque villa; a studio, with Silvio seated at an easel painting a masterpiece; a Madonna, with herself for a model. With what loving delight would he gaze at her features, and then reproduce them upon the canvas, so that she seemed to breathe there in a new immortal life, given by his creative genius! Then she fancied herself painting the beautiful landscape from the studio window, and he playfully snatching her brush, and animating the scene with groups of little loves playing among the flowers.

These dreamy fancies faded before the daylight peeping through the window-shutters; but the return to life's realities did not dispel her joy, for she knew that Silvio loved her, and that she returned his love, and that there was nothing to prevent the happy realization of their wishes. He was an eminent artist, and, as far as appeared, of independent fortune; while her father was also wealthy, and nothing would please him more than to see her happily married.

As these thoughts passed through her mind, she rose, and, after opening her windows, went

—a most unusual thing for her to do— straight to her looking-glass. Her masses of chestnut hair hung in loose waves on her shoulders, and her rosy face and sparkling eyes were radiant with the happiness of an acknowledged love. It was a lovely picture that offered itself to her gaze; and she studied it without a thought of vanity, but unconsciously influenced by her dreamy fancy of the night, and finally she said half aloud, —

"Why, I should make a very good model for a Madonna." Then, blushing at herself, she turned hastily away, exclaiming, "Oh, how silly I am!" Then she began slowly to dress herself, taking more than usual care, comparing and contrasting colors, that an artist's eye might find nothing to criticise.

As she gradually calmed from the first tumult of happy revery which lingered about her, her New-England common sense warned her to look at the practical side of the matter, and she felt that she ought not to delay speaking to her father on this serious subject. Thus resolved, she went down to breakfast, where she found Mr. Norman already waiting for her, reading

the paper. She ran up to him, clasping paper and all in such a sudden, fervent embrace, that he started, exclaiming, —

"Good gracious! What's the matter?" Nevertheless he took his daughter's head in both his hands, and kissed her repeatedly; then, holding her for a moment at arm's length, he said, "Why, how beautiful you look this morning! Your face seems to glow all over with love for your old papa."

That expression brought her entirely to herself, and a slight twinge of remorse subdued the fervor of her new sentiment. Edith had never loved before: all her affection had been concentrated upon the father, who had made her his beloved companion. She had never realized that any new feeling might interfere with this filial affection. Even on the evening before, when she confessed her love to Silvio, and during the night, while she was dreaming of it, she had not thought how it might affect him. His happiness had always been so bound up in hers, that it had not even suggested itself to her that any thing could occur to please her which could possibly affect him otherwise. But

now her mind was calm; and her father's unsuspecting pleasure in her unusual demonstration of affection brought her a quick, vivid consciousness of what her intended announcement must be to him. She grew very sober, and stroked her father's thin hair, kissing him on the forehead, and, with tears in her eyes, replied,—

"Yes, with love for you, dear papa, but yet — not you alone;" and she hid her glowing face in his bosom.

Mr. Norman had always treated Edith rather as a dear comrade than a daughter; their conversation was bright, good-humored, matter-of-fact, often witty; they discussed the various topics of the day, often taking different sides for argument's sake, though in perfect sympathy and harmony. Their love, deep and true and tender as it was, needed but little outward manifestation beyond the night and morning kiss. They could not have lived so long in such companionship without learning to read each other's feelings from the slightest expressions. At these words of Edith, which were a revelation to him, at her unwonted demonstra-

tion of affection, and last girlish gesture, he felt that she had something serious and definite to tell him. He patted her head, and, after recovering from the first surprise, said kindly, —

"Edith, dear, you have something important to tell me, though I partly guess it. I really had never thought of this; though, of course, it is only natural." He felt a sharp pang as he said this, but controlled it for her sake, and continued cheerfully, "Now, whoever it is, I know that you have chosen wisely, and you are sure of my approval. Come, let us have our breakfast, and then we will talk it over quietly."

Saying this, he kissed her once more, and, leading her to her seat, placed her in it, and then took his own, while she busied herself with the mysteries of tea-making. For a little while nothing was said, except with reference to their breakfast. Neither of them seemed inclined to touch upon the subject that filled their thoughts; and, for the first time in their lives, there arose between father and daughter a slight touch of embarrassment. This, however, could not last long; for both were largely endowed with the self-control, strong moral

sense and frankness, so characteristic of the best American type. Mr. Norman was the first to break the ice. Seeing that Edith, though she drank her tea, was wholly unable to eat, however bravely she tried to seem as usual, he said quietly, —

"Edith, who is he?"

The girl did not blush nor hesitate. Accustomed from infancy to perfect openness with her father, and eager to justify his unselfish readiness to enter into her feelings, she met his eyes frankly, and answered, —

"Signor Silvio."

"Signor Silvio!" repeated her father, not altogether taken by surprise, "Signor Silvio! It is a good choice, and very suitable; for your tastes are all in sympathy. He stands high in his profession, and is an excellent fellow. I think the choice is a wise one; but, before you fully consent, let me investigate his antecedents. Has he declared himself?"

"Why, yes, papa! but not until last night, though I suspected it before." She said it as simply and naturally as she might to a sister.

"Are you engaged, then?"

"Engaged! Without consulting you? Why, no, indeed, papa! How could you think such a thing?"

"Then, what are your relations?"

"Why, dear papa, I am sure I do not know," said Edith, slightly embarrassed. "There is nothing settled. He merely revealed his love to me last night on the Pincio; and — I — did not reject it. Please, papa, do not say any thing more about it just now."

"I will not, dear child;" and as they rose from the table he kissed her tenderly. "But I must be prepared for him. I suppose he will follow the regular Italian custom, and, having assured himself of your love, will come, or send to me, asking for your hand; and I, doing in Rome as the Romans do, will grant or refuse it, as I may see fit, eh? In this case, I suppose I shall have to consent, as I have really no objection to the match. Then will come the question of dowry. A girl cannot get married without that in Italy. What shall I say? Ten thousand dollars, or twenty, or fifty?" said Mr. Norman, trying to speak lightly, and hide his real heartache at the coming change in their lives.

"O papa, how you run on! I don't suppose Signor Silvio has thought of such a thing. He seems quite independent in regard to money matters, for his works would bring high prices if he cared to sell them; but he seems indifferent about it. I am sure he does not think any thing about my dowry."

"That may be, as far as he is concerned. I suppose love in a cottage is all either of you think about as yet. But his relatives will feel differently; and I certainly intend to make sure of a well-furnished larder in that cottage, for I do not think you will refuse me a room in it."

"O papa! In the first place, Signor Silvio has no relations. He is an orphan, and Father Francesco is his guardian."

"Father Francesco! Who is he?"

"Why, that venerable old monk we met once in his studio."

"Oh, yes! I remember. But these monks are sometimes worse than relations. By the way, what is Signor Silvio's family name? This Italian fashion of calling every one by the first name is rather awkward. Here we have known Signor Silvio and Signor Valerio for the

last three years, and we don't know the surname of either."

Curiously enough, this had not occurred to Edith, but she thought little of it, saying carelessly, —

"Oh, well! we can ask Signor Valerio when he comes to give me my lesson."

Valerio came as usual, early in the afternoon, and kissed Edith's hand, as was his habit whether Mr. Norman was present or not. He retailed all the artistic news of the town in his light-hearted, talkative way; and some little time passed pleasantly before any attempt was made to begin the lesson, to which Edith seemed unusually indifferent. Mr. Norman took the first good opportunity that offered to say, —

"How curious it is that we have been acquainted so long, and yet do not know your family name! We have always called you Signor Valerio, as is the custom here. What is your whole name?"

"Valerio Trapassi; though we artists always call each other only by the first name."

"Yes; but it sounds very odd to us foreign-

ers." Then he added, as carelessly as he could, "And what is Signor Silvio's?"

Valerio was taken aback by this unexpected question, and hesitated; but, suddenly recovering himself, he stammered hastily, —

"Silvio — Signor Silvio? Why — Romano, Silvio Romano," thinking to himself, "That is true enough. Silvio is a Roman."

Mr. Norman noticed Valerio's hesitation, and thought it somewhat strange; but Edith, who was occupied in arranging her colors, merely heard the words, and, turning to him, said, —

"Silvio Romano? I wonder if he is a descendant of Giulio Romano."

"He ought to be, Miss Edith," replied Valerio. "He has certainly inherited his talent."

"What did we read about Giulio Romano the other evening, in Shakespeare, Edith?" asked Mr. Norman. "You must remember: you were reading it aloud."

"Why, yes, papa: here it is." And, opening the Shakespeare which lay on the table, she found the passage, and read it in English: —

"That rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity, and could put breath into his work,

would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape."[1]

"What does that mean?" asked Valerio with curiosity. Edith translated it; but, when she used the word "*scimmia*" for ape, the idea struck him as very odd, though strong and characteristic, and he laughed, exclaiming, —

"Fine idea! Very original! A great artist is *la scimmia della Natura* (the ape of Nature). Excellent! I must study English, and read Shakespeare. A man who can define the highest perfection of art so concisely is more than a great poet: he is a great genius."

Edith, though busying herself about her easel and brushes, seemed reluctant to begin her lesson; and Mr. Norman, noticing it, advised her to omit it for once. Valerio's hesitation in telling Silvio's name had made a strong impression on his mind; and he resolved to ask an explanation, but not in Edith's presence: so, speaking in English, he said to her, —

"Edith, dear, I don't think you care much about your lesson to-day. You had better put it off. I will ask the young man to go with me

[1] Winter's Tale, act v. scene 2.

for a walk; and when I come back we will see what is the next step to be taken, — whether the guardian will come to see me, or the ward propose to you."

"If you think best, papa," replied Edith, who was glad to be left alone, and thought it not impossible that Silvio might call: so, turning to Valerio, she said, —

"I think I will not paint to-day. I am not at all in the mood for it; and you have always told me not to work when not in the spirit of it."

"Certainly not, certainly not. It is useless to attempt it: the result would be utter failure. What do you say to a visit to Silvio's studio? He has just finished a remarkably beautiful Madonna."

"A Madonna! I did not know that he was painting one. What Madonna is it?"

"Oh! I said *Madonna* for fun, because it is a very beautiful face; but it is a fancy sketch, or a portrait from memory, of some very lovely woman, for no one sat for it."

"No one sat for it? Whom does she look like?" asked Edith with interest.

"Nobody that I know, but one of the most angelic faces I ever saw. You had better come with me, and judge for yourself." Then, turning to Mr. Norman, "And you too, Mr. Norman. You will see one of the best creations the Roman school has given this year."

"Certainly, I will go with pleasure," assented Mr. Norman, seizing the chance to go with Valerio, knowing that Edith would surely refuse, as she did, saying, —

"Thank you, Signor Valerio, but I do not feel like going out to-day. You had better go with papa."

Valerio, knowing them so well, easily perceived that something was the matter, and that she really wished him to go: so he replied, —

"Very well. — Come, Mr. Norman;" and in a few minutes they had left her, Mr. Norman saying in English as he went out, "I shall not be long, dear."

Edith sat a while at her easel, vainly endeavoring to paint; but her hand trembled, her colors would not blend, and she finally abandoned the effort. Then she wandered restlessly about the drawing-room, arranging the

flowers, moving the ornaments, thinking that if any one called she would receive there, and not in her studio. Every moment she expected to hear the bell, and to see Silvio enter; but no one came. The afternoon wore on; and her father, who had promised to return soon, was still absent. She thought how embarrassing it would be for her if Father Francesco should call while he was away. She heard the servants laying the table for dinner, and not one of the three persons for whom she was looking had come. As evening approached, the rooms grew dark, and she went out on to the balcony with a book; but, unable to fix her mind upon it, she sat watching the passers-by, growing more and more anxious at her father's prolonged absence, which could hardly mean any thing good. What could have detained him so long? Why had not Silvio called? Why had he hesitated so strangely in declaring himself the evening before? Whose portrait was it that he had painted, but of which he had never spoken? In the gathering gloom of the evening hour, doubts which she had thought wholly set at rest again assailed her, and pressed heavily

upon her heart. Who could this woman be? Valerio had said that she was exquisitely beautiful. She wished that she had gone with them to see it. But how could she, after what had passed last night, go to Silvio's studio, at least until he had seen her father? Her mind was tossed to and fro on the waves of this troubled sea of thought. Yesterday she had been as happy and free as a bird, with no thought or care but for her art and her father. How twenty-four hours had changed every thing, and left her anxious, worried, suspicious, and despondent! Were these the first fruits of love? Harassed and fretted almost beyond endurance, she was almost on the point of bursting into tears, when she caught the sound of her father's familiar step; and he soon hurried into the room, exclaiming, —

"Well, child, have you been worrying about me? I could not help it: I have been detained on your account, and could not come any sooner."

Edith rushed to his arms, crying, —

"Dear, dear father! where have you been so long? I have been alone all day: no one has

been here, not even Silvio." Mr. Norman, without answering, pressed her tenderly to his heart, and led her into the dining-room, where dinner was already waiting. As they came into the lighted room, Edith caught sight of her father's troubled face, which contrasted with the assumed cheerfulness of his voice, and exclaimed, —

"Why, father, what has happened? You look so worried: what is it? Tell me. Has any thing happened to Silvio?"

"No, dear child, nothing has happened. I have seen Silvio, and the old monk, and all of them. And we have settled matters as far as possible: but there is some trouble that may cause delay; that is all. Don't worry about it; but let us have dinner, for I am awfully hungry, and I suppose you are too, it is so late. Come, child, let us sit down, and after dinner I will tell you all about it."

He spoke lightly, to quiet any serious suspicions in Edith's mind; but she knew him too well to be so easily deceived. There was a restlessness and anxiety under his pleasant manner; and when they went to the table, not-

withstanding his professions of hunger, the meal was a mere form to either of them, and was quickly despatched. Rising, he led her to her favorite seat in the studio, and, seating himself beside her, detailed to her the events of the day.

CHAPTER VII.

EX IGNOTIS PARENTIBUS.

WHEN Mr. Norman went out with Valerio that afternoon, he thought that a very few words would explain his hesitation, and that he should quickly return. He had lived in Italy long enough to know how little the Italians could understand the perfect confidence that might exist between an American father and daughter. He was sure that Valerio would tell him what he would not tell Edith, without the least suspicion that he would go directly home and confide it to her, whatever it might be: so, as soon as they were in the street, he turned to Valerio, saying, —

"Signor Valerio, you have been Signor Silvio's companion for years, have you not?"

"Yes, since we were boys together at school."

"Then you must know him pretty thoroughly."

"As thoroughly as if he were my own brother; and I love him as if he were."

"I think he deserves it: he seems a noble fellow."

"Noble!" exclaimed Valerio with enthusiasm, "he is more than that: he is one of the purest of men. And that is the greatest praise I can give him; for nothing is rarer, especially among artists."

"I am glad to hear it of him," returned Mr. Norman; then, gradually approaching the subject which engrossed him, he added, "And his name is Romano, Silvio Romano,—a good name. What was his father?"

Mr. Norman asked the question with assumed carelessness; but he watched Valerio closely, and noticed again in his face the same hesitation he had shown before. He looked down, then up, as if trying to recollect, then stammered, "His father? Why—I never heard much about him. In fact—I only know that Silvio lost both his parents when he was an infant, and was left under the guardianship of Father Francesco."

Valerio, naturally one of the most open-

hearted of men, and incapable of concealment, said this with such a visible effort at indifference, that a less experienced man than Mr. Norman would have easily detected his embarrassment. Seeing that there was more to learn than he had expected, he invited Valerio into a *café*, where they could speak more at their ease; and seated in a retired corner, where they were in no danger of interruption, he resumed the conversation, saying in a serious tone, —

"Signor Valerio, we Americans like to speak frankly, and to the point. I have sought this interview with you, because I must ask some questions which I do not like to put directly to your friend Signor Silvio; but, first of all, you know, without doubt, that he is in love with my daughter Edith."

This unexpected statement made Valerio somewhat nervous; for he felt guiltily that he had encouraged the two, praising each to the other, carrying messages, aiding and abetting good-naturedly as much as he could. So he dreaded, now that Mr. Norman had discovered their love, and perhaps his assistance, that some measure of the paternal wrath was about to be

poured out upon his devoted head. He raised his eyes with a penitent look, stammering, —

"Mr. Norman — really — I don't know — but there may be some truth in what you say."

"Of course there is. If Signor Silvio has not confided it to you, I will. He is in love with Edith: he told her so last night. She has accepted him; and I, for my part, have not the least objection."

He said this in an open, frank, matter-of-fact way that astounded Valerio, who had expected something very different; and in his excitable Italian manner, springing from one extreme to the other, he seized Mr. Norman's hand, exclaiming, —

"My dear Mr. Norman, you are the best and kindest man in the world, — a paragon of fathers. Italian fathers, who treat their daughters' lovers as if they were robbers and brigands, should take example by you. Thank you for your confidence. I assure you it is a perfect match: there never were two people more suited to each other than my friend Silvio and your lovely daughter. I am so glad that you approve. Let me hurry to the studio, and tell

my friend. I have hardly seen him to-day, and when he went out this morning he seemed very much depressed. I suppose he was uncertain how you would feel about the matter; and I will go at once, and re-assure him. Thank you, Mr. Norman, for Silvio's sake; thank you."

He had already risen, and would have rushed off to carry the happy news to Silvio; but Mr Norman quietly held him by the hand, saying, —

"Please sit down, Signor Valerio; for I have some questions to ask. Besides, I am not at all sure that you would find your friend at the studio now: he is probably somewhere else," he said with a smile.

"Why, yes! of course. How stupid I am! Of course!" said Valerio with an answering smile, as he sat down again. Mr. Norman drew his chair closer, and said seriously, —

"Signor Valerio, I noticed, both this morning and again just now, that you hesitated when I asked you about Signor Silvio's name and parentage. Remember, that, after the declaration which I have made, I have a right to ask the question, and you are in honor bound to give

me a true answer. Is Romano truly Signor Silvio's surname? And who was his father?"

Mr. Norman looked straight into Valerio's face, who, somewhat abashed, lowered his eyes, and with unfeigned humility replied, "You are an honorable man, Mr. Norman; and your question now deserves an honest answer. I said Romano, because Silvio is a Roman artist; but I do not know his name, nor who was his father: indeed, I believe that Silvio himself is ignorant of both. Father Francesco is the only man who can answer your questions, and I advise you to see him. Fortunately he is here to-day, and I shall be happy to lead you to his convent."

Mr. Norman felt a cold shudder run through him at this unexpected announcement: his practical mind measured at a glance the difficulty of the situation. Such a disclosure would be a terrible blow to Edith's lofty moral standard. If he had been, no matter how poor, or how lowly born; but illegitimate! He trembled as he thought of her; but, before returning home, he determined to sift the matter to the very bottom.

"Signor Valerio," he said, "your words have affected me very deeply. You say that Father Francesco alone can tell me? Then take me to him at once. I must learn all I can before this matter goes any farther."

Valerio rose immediately without a word; and, leaving the *café*, Mr. Norman was soon knocking at the door of Father Francesco's cell in the Capuchin Convent, while Valerio was walking up and down under the beautiful arches of the cloister, with its thousand slender pillars crowned with fantastically carved capitals, anxiously awaiting the result of the conference.

Mr. Norman had met Father Francesco only once or twice in Silvio's studio, and had never taken any particular notice of him. Though liberal in regard to religious questions, he had a Protestant's natural suspicion of Catholics, and especially of monks, considering their celibacy, as most Protestants do, a source of much scandal and immorality: so, when he learned the deep interest that Father Francesco took in Silvio's welfare, he could not but feel grave doubts as to the relationship that existed between them. When, therefore, he heard Father

Francesco's gentle "Walk in," in reply to his knock, he felt, for the first time in his life, a nervous dread at the idea of encountering a subtle and unscrupulous adversary. But, on entering the simple room of the friar, the quiet of the place, the benevolent, venerable countenance of Father Francesco, the refined dignity of manner with which he greeted him and showed him to a seat, somewhat re-assured him. He had never met a Catholic priest in close conversation before; and though a man of the world, and naturally frank and confident, he felt strangely awkward, especially as the subject which he came to discuss was one which required such delicate handling. But Father Francesco put him at his ease at once, saying, —

"Mr. Norman, I am exceedingly sorry that you should have taken the trouble to call upon me, for I was just about to go to you. I think I know the object of your visit; for Silvio was here this morning, and had a long conversation with me, and I was going to you on his behalf."

This declaration somewhat re-assured Mr. Norman: for he thought that if Father Fran-

cesco, acting as Silvio's guardian, was coming to see him, it must be, according to the Italian custom, formally to ask for Edith's hand; and in that case, the question of Silvio's birth must be all clear, and his suspicions and anxiety uncalled for. He replied in a tone of relief, —

"Were you? I suppose to ask my daughter's hand?"

"I am sorry to say, no. On the contrary, to apologize for his hasty avowal to your daughter yesterday evening, and to say that at present he is not in a position to form such ties."

At this, Mr. Norman's first suspicions revived with full force; and he asked in somewhat of an authoritative tone, "And why not?"

Father Francesco raised his head with the dignity of a man unaccustomed to be so addressed by any but his religious superiors; but, controlling himself immediately, he replied in a sad, almost humble tone, —

"You, as the young lady's father, have the right to ask, after what happened last evening. I, as Silvio's guardian, owe you a full explanation. Silvio did wrong: in his present position he had no right to avow his love; but

youth is impetuous. I told him so this morning, and was coming to you to explain that there can be nothing between him and your daughter, at least for the present, on account of our ignorance of his parentage."

"Your ignorance? Is he illegitimate? And how came you to be his guardian?" asked Mr. Norman, surprised.

"I have no proof that he is illegitimate," replied Father Francesco calmly, taking no notice of Mr. Norman's implied doubt. "I can only say that so far we do not know who were his parents. He was intrusted to my care, when he was about two years old, by a person whose name I am not at liberty to disclose, and who made ample provision for his maintenance and education. Knowing that if left with him the child might be brought up to a bad or even criminal life, with the permission of my superior, I accepted the charge, with the express condition that the man who brought him to me should formally renounce any claims or rights he might have over him, which he did. What relation he was to him this man never revealed. Since then I have been his guardian; and you

can judge for yourself how faithfully I have discharged my duty."

"As to that, I must do you the justice to acknowledge how superior his education is to that of most young artists, and how noble his character," replied Mr. Norman, ever ready to give credit where credit was due.

"Thank you, sir," replied Father Francesco, much pleased with this acknowledgment. "I claim no merit beyond performing as thoroughly as I could a duty which I voluntarily assumed."

"And you know nothing more definite about him, not even his name?"

"No: the man would reveal nothing. Silvio was baptized in our parochial church as Silvio *ex Ignotis*."

"*Ex* what?" asked Mr. Norman, bewildered.

"*Ex Ignotis Parentibus;* but generally they are called *ex Ignotis* simply."

"And, should such people marry, what name would their children assume?"

"*Ex Ignotis,* unless his Holiness, by a special dispensation, should allow them to assume their mother's name, or that of some sponsor,

or person who is willing to adopt the child. That is the law in the Papal States."

"What an infamous law!" exclaimed Mr. Norman indignantly.

"We are bound to obey the laws, not discuss them. Our mother-church is severe in order to be kind. She thus protects the sanctity of the holy sacrament of matrimony, and shows in what abhorrence she holds the sin of unholy alliances."

"How? By bringing the shame of them upon the innocent children?"

But Father Francesco calmly quoted the passage from Holy Writ: "I will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and show mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." And, as Mr. Norman was about to protest against what he considered an injustice, he prevented him by adding hastily, "And our Holy Father the Pope, who receives the light of grace from our Saviour, shows his mercy to those who love God, and keep his commandments. I have so brought up my ward, that, should I never suc-

ceed in discovering his parentage, I have little doubt that his Holiness, in consideration of his moral and professional worth, would allow him to assume my name, which I would gladly bestow on him."

This proposal awakened again Mr. Norman's first vague suspicions as to the connection between Father Francesco and Silvio; but the venerable, candid expression, the lustre of purity which irradiated the monk's face, made him half ashamed of his doubts, and he thought to himself, "This man is either a saint or a most consummate hypocrite. I will hope for the best, and trust him until I have clear evidence to the contrary." He continued aloud, "Father Francesco, your offer of giving your own name to Silvio might be satisfactory in Italy, but hardly to us Americans. I do not say that my daughter would absolutely refuse to unite herself to a man because his birth was unknown. We have no aristocracy of birth, and a man of the very humblest *honest* origin can aspire to the highest position if he is personally worthy of it; but a doubtful origin would be a very strong barrier to a union."

"So I thought, and I was coming to you to explain what advice I gave Silvio this morning. I placed before him the objections that would be raised to a union with him. I reproved him for his impetuosity, and advised that this incipient attachment be stopped at once, at least until something more definite can be learned about his parentage; for I have not given up all hope of its eventual discovery, and I hold a clew which I think may lead to it."

"You hold a clew?"

"Yes, and an important one."

"Then what do you advise?"

"What I advised Silvio: to cultivate the first moral precepts which we learn on entering the religious orders, — patience, resignation, and obedience. They are hard for passionate youth to follow, but the only ones to lead to contentment and moral satisfaction. Silvio has promised to be guided by me, and I know he will keep his word; and, from what I have heard of your estimable daughter, I feel that she also will see the propriety of acting according to our maturer judgment. I propose, therefore, that for the present the matter should rest

where it is; that your daughter should regard Silvio's declaration as not having been made; that they should remain simply friends, as they were before. Meanwhile I will use my utmost efforts to unravel the mystery of Silvio's birth; and if successful, as I confidently hope, and it be found satisfactory, it will be time enough then to arrange an alliance."

Mr. Norman listened attentively to the cool, unimpassioned, business-like way with which Father Francesco discussed the matter. He thought, "These monks, having renounced all worldly interests, learn to treat all human affections and passions as subordinate and of no account when brought into conflict with reason." But he had a father's sympathy, and felt what a terrible blow this would be to Edith, whose love had been kindled, and who was now waiting at home, anxious indeed, probably, at his delay, but surely unsuspicious of the sad revelation he must make to her. Still he could not but confess the wisdom of what Father Francesco said, and accept it as their only course.

"It will be a terrible shock to my daughter,"

he said, "to learn all this; but there is no alternative, and we will follow your advice."

Father Francesco rose, and taking Mr. Norman by the hand, said with deep feeling, "Dear Mr. Norman, I have spoken as my duty as minister of the gospel and my long experience have dictated; but I assure you I sympathize from my heart with you and your admirable daughter. I wish to Heaven Silvio had been more prudent, and spared her this sorrow. But it is done, and our care must be to alleviate it all we can. To-morrow morning I leave for my priory at Sonnino: Silvio is to join me there in company with Valerio. When there, I will leave no stone unturned to discover the truth; for there alone can this mystery be unravelled."

"At Sonnino? Why can't we join you also? I might be of some assistance. Do you need money?"

"No, Mr. Norman; but your advice might be of service. I should be very glad to have you there in the Foresteria.[1] But would it do for

[1] A building outside the cloister, to accommodate ladies, who are not admitted into the convent.

the young people to be brought into daily contact?"

Mr. Norman raised his head with paternal pride, as he answered, "Father Francesco, you, an Italian, judging from the limited education here given to women, naturally mistrust their powers of self-control; but our girls are differently brought up. The freedom of intercourse between the sexes from their earliest youth, the high moral tone implanted by their early training, the confidence reposed in them, render them worthy of trust. I am sure of my daughter. Do not fear for her."

Father Francesco listened quietly to this assertion, then said approvingly, "I am delighted to see with what confidence you can speak for your daughter: I wish that I could say as much for our Italian girls, and, even more, our young men. But fortunately, in this case, Silvio is an exception, and I can trust him implicitly. Come then, and we will see if you cannot also be of use. Another favor I must ask of you," he continued, stopping Mr. Norman as he was turning to go: "Silvio was here early this morning; and, poor fellow, he

is in a dreadful state. He had not slept all night, and had repented over and over again of his rashness: he was tortured by the thought that he had brought sorrow to your daughter, whom he loves devotedly. I comforted him somewhat by promising him to go to you, explain his position, and entreat your daughter's and your pardon. You forestalled me; and, since we have come to a friendly understanding, I think that if you were to go to him and tell him that you have no ill feeling towards him, but are going to join me in my efforts to help him, it will be a real act of charity on your part, and be a great comfort to him."

"Why, to be sure I will!" cried Mr. Norman, his generous heart really cheered at the thought of helping another. "I will go at once. Valerio is below, waiting for me; and he will go with me. Good-by! Let us hope for the best."

"The Lord's blessing be with you," replied Father Francesco; and, opening the door, he courteously accompanied his visitor through the long corridors, to the head of the superb marble staircase that led to the courtyard of

the cloister. There he waited until Mr. Norman had descended. At the last landing he turned, lifted his hat to the watcher above, and disappeared under the pointed arches.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STOLEN PORTRAIT.

VALERIO had been waiting all this time, with what patience he could muster, pacing up and down the cloister, or the little pebbled paths that led to the well in the centre of the court, thinking that the court itself was not much more than a well; the convent on three sides of it, and the church on the fourth, hardly admitting a ray of sunshine, except at noon. From pure idleness he lowered the mossy bucket from the highly ornamented iron framework, surmounted by a cross, which overarched the deep, clear water, and, drawing it up full, took a long drink: still Mr. Norman did not come. He took out his cigar-case, and, selecting a long cigar, drew out the straw, lighted it, and, leaning on the well-curb, began to smoke. But his anxious thoughts would not let him rest: he started up again, and walked hastily about, gesticulating, stopping, walking on again.

"Here is a pretty mess we have got into," his thoughts ran; "and I like a fool helped it along as much as I could. Why did I not keep on, and try my own luck with my interesting pupil? Why did I yield at the first rebuff, and help Silvio instead? I am so good-natured, and I do love Silvio so dearly. Had I seen the slightest chance for myself, I would have persisted; but there was not a shadow of hope for me. Now, if she had only fallen in love with *me*, how easily every thing might have been arranged! I may be very poor; but my father is still living, and is in a respectable government office. True, he only earns five francs a day, barely enough to keep soul and body together; but he has a name to give me, and an honorable one, while poor Silvio has none. What difference that makes I don't see; but the world does, and poor Silvio, with all his genius and goodness, and money into the bargain, has to blush before this stupid world. Bah! I wish I was the Pope: I would settle this matter pretty quick. Father Francesco must know more than he is willing to tell; but there is nothing to be got out of these monks when they are sworn to

secrecy. I should like to know what relation he is to Silvio. He is wonderfully fond of him, that is certain. Ah! these monks, these monks!" But at this point, as if ashamed of his own thoughts, he exclaimed, "Pshaw! Some monks are bad enough, but not Father Francesco. There is a mystery in all this, and probably a sin somewhere; but I cannot impute it to Father Francesco. How long Mr. Norman is staying! I wonder if he has got any satisfaction. And poor Silvio, how he must feel! I am so sorry for him. I would be glad enough to give him my name, if I could. Why should he be blamed and discarded because some wicked father or mother dropped him into the hands of Father Francesco? He might be thankful that he was not dropped into some foundling hospital. Who knows but he may be an offshoot of some great family? He has never wanted for money. The banker has always cashed his drafts without asking any questions. Who the deuce furnishes this money? If some great personage, why not give him his mother's name? A bar-sinister is no bar to social position nowadays, if only managed

rightly. Uff! It is a bad mess anyway. I only wish she had fallen in love with me instead. How smooth and easy every thing would have been! But I was born under an unlucky star; and only models look at me with any sort of interest, though I never employ them. Pretty thing, if I were to marry a model! I should have to give up landscapes, and take to figure-painting. Bah!" This thought so disgusted him that he tossed away the stump of his cigar, saying, "How bitter that tobacco tastes! Papal monopoly! That is the history of it. Cabbage-leaves flavored with snuff and licorice! Bah!"

He went to the well again, and rinsed his mouth, as if to rinse away the very thought. Just at this moment Mr. Norman made his appearance with a somewhat more satisfied look on his face than when he left him. Valerio rushed up to him, and anxiously inquired, —

"Well, is every thing explained?"

"Not quite, but we are on the way."

Then, taking Valerio's arm, Mr. Norman told him the result of his interview, while they went to Silvio's studio. When he mentioned the

plan of the excursion to Sonnino, and their stay at the convent, where Father Francesco had hopes of discovering the secret of Silvio's parentage, Valerio exclaimed, "Sonnino, that nest of brigands!"

"Brigands? Are there brigands there?"

"It is the very worst place in the Roman Campania. However, if we go as guests of Father Francesco, there is no danger; for they never disturb or interfere with the religious orders. Moreover, we shall be two artists and two foreigners: from the first they know they could get nothing; and foreigners they seldom care to attack, for it would bring the Papal police upon them at once, to satisfy the foreign governments. So we are perfectly safe in that respect. But I do not see how he expects to find out about Silvio among those mountains. However, it is a picturesque country, and Miss Edith and I can fill our portfolios with sketches."

He was not quite sure in his own mind about the propriety of the two lovers going together; but he thought to himself the Americans were very queer people, very unconventional, and, at

any rate, it was not his business to interfere.

When they reached the studio, Valerio, without knocking, opened the door, and admitted Mr. Norman. The moment he entered the room, his eyes fell upon the lovely face of the portrait on the easel, before which Silvio was seated in an attitude of utter despondency. Roused by the opening of the door, he turned; but, perceiving Mr. Norman, a deadly pallor overspread his face, and he seemed wholly unable to move. Mr. Norman, understanding his agitation, and sympathizing in his distress, hastened towards him with arms extended and a friendly smile, and, taking him by both hands, said, —

"My dear Signor Silvio, do not take it so hard. Cheer up, cheer up! I know all. Edith and Father Francesco have told me every thing. I have come, not to find fault with you, but to cheer you up. Father Francesco and I have been talking it over, and we will try all we can to get to the bottom of this mystery; and then all will be right. For the present, both you and Edith must be as if nothing had taken

place, but be merely friends, as before. I can trust you: still more, I can trust her. When every thing is cleared up, we may resume negotiations. Let us forget what is past, or rather defer it to a more convenient season. This evening you will both of you come to see us, and we will arrange about our excursion to Sonnino. Now let me examine this picture of yours, which strikes me as of superior merit."

Silvio, at this outspoken, sympathetic address, remained as if petrified. He could hardly speak: in fact, Mr. Norman had said all there was to be said; and he could only, warmly returning his friendly grasp of the hand, say in a trembling voice, "Just as you please. You are so good — so very good to me. God bless you! God bless you!"

"Come, come, no more of this. Let us see the picture," cried Mr. Norman bruskly, to hide his own emotion. Valerio had busied himself, meanwhile, with the blinds and shutters, to throw the best light on the canvas, thinking to himself, "Extraordinary people, these Americani! How coolly he takes this matter! An Italian father would have raised such a rumpus

by this time as to have called for the interference of the police."

Mr. Norman was enthusiastic in his praise of Silvio's work, and noticed, as the others had, its strong resemblance to the young painter. Silvio had been so touched by Mr. Norman's kindness and delicacy in regard to the distressing subject of his birth, that he felt it his duty, in return, to reveal to him all that he knew about himself, and which, until now, he had kept a secret, even from his dearest friend Valerio.

"Mr. Norman," he said, "it is not a fancy sketch, but my mother's portrait, copied from this locket, which has always hung round my neck." So saying, he took it off, and handed it to Mr. Norman.

"Then, you do know who your mother was?" he asked anxiously, opening the locket, and comparing it with the face on the easel, while Valerio, amazed, looked at it over his shoulder, murmuring half reproachfully to Silvio, "Ah! You did keep *one* secret from me!"

"I never knew her, or heard any thing about her: only this locket was fastened round my

neck, when, as an infant, I was placed in Father Francesco's care; and, from my strong resemblance to it, both he and I feel that she must have been my poor mother." Then, turning to Valerio, he added, "Forgive me. There are some secrets we keep even from our dearest friends, when the knowledge of them could only give pain."

Mr. Norman examined the locket carefully. It was a small miniature, but painted by a master's hand, surrounded by a circle of tiny diamonds set in gold. In the centre of the outer case was engraved a small ducal coronet, but neither inscription, monogram, or crest that could give the slightest clew for identification. The head was of the purest Grecian type, and might have represented Helen of Troy, with the perfectly shaped head, straight forehead, delicately chiselled nose, arched eyebrows, and rosy lips, a double Cupid's bow; while Love's own finger had dimpled the short, round chin. Who does not know the pretty story, that Cupid, when he had modelled his first beauty, put his forefinger on her chin, to admire his work, and the clay, being soft, retained the

impress in the form of a dimple? Her light chestnut hair, drawn back into the classic knot, fell thence in a volume of ringlets upon her neck; but her eyes were especially remarkable in an Italian, for they were of a dark, clear blue, like the Mediterranean on its brightest days.

Mr. Norman and Valerio stood gazing in admiration, first at the miniature, then at the picture on the easel. But it was growing dark. Mr. Norman remembered what anxiety Edith must be suffering alone at home all this time: so, giving back the locket, he exclaimed, "Why, it is getting late. Signor Silvio, I consider this an important clew to our hoped-for discovery; and I have no doubt that it was to this that Father Francesco alluded when he spoke of having one. Your copy is a splendid work. It is easy to see that you worked at it with all your heart and soul." Then taking Silvio's hand, and pointing to the portrait, he added earnestly, "The son of such a mother can never be ashamed of his birth." Then in a lighter tone, "Good-by! Come to us this evening, and we will arrange our plans for the excursion to Sonnino. *A rivederci!*"

He hastened home, where Edith was so anxiously expecting him, and narrated to her the events of the day. When he spoke of the portrait, and stated it to be that of Silvio's mother, she inwardly reproached herself for having for a moment doubted Silvio's sincerity or truth: but this discovery revived her hopes, for through the mother's portrait there was almost a certainty of learning his parentage, or, at least, her name, which he might obtain the right to assume; and assuredly, she must have been of gentle blood. This thought restored her natural cheerfulness; and, when the two young artists called in the evening, she and her father received them with the old ease and cordiality, very much to their surprise: for Silvio was timid, nervous, and almost overcome by the emotions and sufferings of the past twenty-four hours; and Valerio, excited by the events of the day, and quite unable to understand such self-control, thought again to himself, "These Americani are a complete puzzle to me. How easily they take every thing! I wonder if they have milk instead of blood in their veins! I thought there would be a regular scene, — she

falling into Silvio's arms with floods of tears, bewailing their hard fate, and wanting to go into a convent; Silvio tearing his hair, cursing the world and everybody in it; the father sternly separating the lovers, reproaching him for breaking his promise, her for bringing disgrace upon his gray hairs by a *mésalliance* with an — *ex Ignotis;* I myself coming in for a broken head, for my good-natured share in the transaction, as a kind of go-between. Instead of that, there they sit in the balcony, — she talking to Silvio as calmly and cheerfully as if nothing had happened; and the old gentleman and I smoking two excellent cigars, and arranging all our plans for this excursion to Sonnino. Wonderful people, these Americani, wonderful!"

The two friends left the house later than usual, after they had arranged every thing for their trip, which they proposed to take a fortnight hence, and walked home. Reaching the studio, through which they had to pass to go to their sleeping-rooms, they found, to their surprise, that the door was ajar, and the lock broken. They rushed in; and, hastily striking a match, Valerio lighted the row of gaslights

in the centre of the room. The reflectors threw the light down sharply upon Silvio's easel — empty. The portrait was gone.

"Oh, my poor mother!" was his involuntary exclamation. "Who could want to steal my picture? What could they do with it?"

Valerio, less immediately affected by the loss, carefully examined the room, and found that nothing else had been taken. As his eyes returned to the empty easel, he perceived something hanging from one of the pegs. He cried, "What is this?" and, to their intense astonishment, they found it to be a bag full of gold napoleons. The sight of the gold changed Valerio's alarm and surprise to hilarity. He exclaimed, "What, in the name of Beelzebub, does this mean? Is it a fairy-tale, or magic? A picture changed into gold! and a great deal of gold too!" letting a number of pieces run through his fingers. "At any rate, you cannot call this a robbery, but merely a forced sale."

But Silvio took no notice of Valerio's merriment: the feeling that some hidden power watched, and to a certain degree controlled, him and his actions, oppressed him with a sense of

mystery; and he was conscious, too, that that mystery included what he so ardently desired to know. He hardly glanced at the gold, but said sadly, as if speaking to himself, "Who would want my poor mother's picture? Who can have any interest in her? Who is this mysterious being, whose presence I feel, but whom I cannot detect? I cannot even have the satisfaction of hating him, for he is always beneficent and generous. Oh! whoever you are, why do you not reveal yourself to me?" Glancing upwards as he spoke, his eyes fell accidentally upon the St. Jerome, which hung high up on the wall. The gaslight, shaded by the reflectors, did not fall directly upon the picture, so that only the flesh tints stood out from the semi-obscurity, — the bare, emaciated chest, the sinewy arm, the hand grasping a stone with which to beat his breast, the wonderfully expressive face bronzed by exposure, and lined and seamed by his austerities, and which, with upraised eyes, seemed imploring forgiveness for his sins from the rudely-carved crucifix above. That face, however, was the face of the supposed model, Leone.

Valerio had followed the direction of Silvio's gaze, and was also struck by the peculiar effect of the light upon the picture, and its powerful treatment. "Your St. Jerome is stepping out of his canvas, to answer your appeal. See how repentant he looks. And to think that it is only the head of that beggar Antonio, who can sit with as good a grace for a cut-throat as for a saint! The power of genius! For, after all, the model only furnishes the clay: it is the artist who puts the soul into it, creating at will, out of the same head, a saint or a sinner. Come, cheer up, man. What is the loss of one picture (if loss it can be called, when you get such pay for it)," jingling the gold in the bag, which he still held, "when you can duplicate it in a week? That country chap you told me about, who took such a fancy to it, may have devised this means of getting it for his church. I must say, it will make a splendid Madonna. We may come across it on some holy altar, receiving the adoration of the faithful, and performing miracles. Why not? Worse pictures than that are worshipped in our churches. Come, let us go to bed, and dream of the moun-

tains and fields we are going to visit. At least, I will; for I suppose your head is too full of Madonnas and saints. This mysterious disappearance will lend a little more romance to our trip; and, at any rate, here you are supplied with plenty of cash for it, and fairly earned. Cheer up: it is not every artist that can command such a price for a single figure." And he thrust the bag into Silvio's coat-pocket, and gently pushed him towards his room, repeating, "Good-night, good-night, happy dreams!" As the door closed behind his friend, he turned out the gas, and retired to his own room.

Left alone, Silvio was so pre-occupied, that he almost mechanically prepared to retire. He threw the gold carelessly into a drawer, while his mind was absorbed recalling the various events and emotions of the last twenty-four hours, — his love, his hopes, his despair, the mystery that hung over him. It was long before he could get to sleep; but, when he did, he slept heavily. The morning light roused him into a half-dreaming state: faint images, growing more and more definite, passed through his mind, — people whom he had not seen for

years, schoolmates and college companions, angelic faces and hideous hags, — a kaleidoscopic change of confused human outlines, resolving themselves finally into two dearly beloved faces, his mother's and Edith's; but, just as he was soothed and tranquillized by this angelic vision, a fierce but ascetic face supplanted them. It was the face of the St. Jerome, but with the fierceness of Leone as the brigand; and he sprang up with a start, broad awake.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BRIGANDS.

A FEW miles from the Alpine village of Sonnino rises a rocky cliff, inaccessible, except by the winding goat-herd paths, which form an almost labyrinthine approach to its summit, or rather to a ledge surrounded by irregular masses of basalt, looking from a distance like the ruined towers of some mediæval castle, and for that reason called by the peasants the "Castellaccio," from behind which a few resolute men could defend themselves against an army.

Some three or four weeks after the events which we have just narrated, a party of men and a few women were scattered in groups, early one morning, on this ledge, variously occupied. Some of the women were spinning wool from their distaffs; others, coming out of the recesses of a deep grotto, brought clothes, which

they hung to dry: the men were playing at cards or dice, with piles of gold or silver coins before them. The first sight of them would have told even an inexperienced person that they were outlaws, or, as they are usually styled in Southern Italy, brigands; not that they were dressed in the traditional stage-costume of the Italian brigands, with their conical hats and flaunting ribbons and feathers, their silver-buttoned velvet jackets and red sashes, the delight and admiration of the gallery urchins at a performance of Fra Diavolo: on the contrary, these men were dressed in the usual every-day costume of the Roman *contadini*, very much the worse for wear; and the same might be said of the women, though their dress is very picturesque in itself: only now and then, from under their jackets or in their sashes, would peep out the butt-end of a pistol, or the handle of a stiletto; and their savage, sunburnt faces, their restless black eyes, the quick, nervous movements of their athletic forms, ready at an instant's notice to leap to the carabines that leaned about against the rocks, the suspicious, watchful air pervading all their actions, denoted

people accustomed to sudden surprises, and fearing at any moment a hostile attack.

One alone of the men was not gambling, but walked up and down smoking a pipe, and soliloquizing moodily, "I don't understand what our captain is up to. In Rome, instead of a good capture, he merely got us to bring away a daub of a picture not worth a *sou*, and to leave an enormous sum for it. Had we remained a day or two longer, I should have been tempted to break into the studio again, and steal it on my own hook. Why not? My orders having been faithfully obeyed, and the money left there, it would have been the painter's business to take good care of it. If he let it be stolen, so much the worse for him. But I always have bad luck: he would start the very next morning, and I had no time to work out my plan. Two thousand francs would have been just the thing for a week's revel in Rome; and here we have been back again for three weeks, and nothing has been done: and money is getting very short; at least, mine is. What with gambling, and women, and one thing and another, I am reduced to my last franc, and

no prospect of more. I wonder why he has gone to that old monk without taking me with him as usual! What can he have to do with him? There have been several chances to stop travellers with plenty of booty, but he has let them slip by: he will attack only government property. For my part, I see no difference between public and private money. We should take advantage of every opportunity. Oh! if only Pietraccio was our chief, I should have my own way; for I can twist him round my finger. He is very much attached to our chief: I must set to work to make him distrust him."

This man was Maso; but no one would have recognized him for the countrified fellow who had tried to buy Silvio's picture. He was now dressed as a peasant; and three weeks had covered again the lower part of his face with a thick black beard, which left only the most brutal part of it visible, while the cynical expression of his large mouth and white teeth, contrasting with the black bristles, gave him the look of a hyena or wildcat.

He was interrupted in his meditations by Pietraccio, who had just won a game and pocketed the money, saying, —

"Halloo, Maso! What is the matter with you? What are you thinking about? Come, have a game with us."

The speaker, who was the second in command of the band, was the very opposite of the wily, sneering, subtle Maso. There was nothing striking about his appearance; and if met working in the fields, or leading a herd of cattle, he would have looked no different from the average *contadino* of the Campania, but for his bold, bull-dog expression. He spoke little, and was utterly incapable of planning or devising any scheme; but in executing he could be relied upon for bravery and daring. To his invitation, Maso replied, —

"Game? I have no money to play with."

"What have you done with your money?" asked Pietraccio, rising, and joining him in his walk.

"Spent it, gambled it, lost it. I have always such bad luck at cards."

"I will lend you some."

"No! Devil take it! I think it would be much better to try and get some, instead of losing it at cards."

"So I think; but there is nothing in prospect just at present."

"No, nothing," assented Maso. Then in a lower tone, so that the others might not hear, he continued, "And, if we keep on at this rate, we shall soon be reduced to eat roots. We have not undertaken a single capture for a month. That last scoundrel who refused our annual tax on his estate, and would have betrayed us to the Papal *gens-d'armes*, he let off with the miserly ransom of fifty thousand francs, while he could easily have squeezed two hundred thousand out of him; and I, for my part, would have sliced off both his ears into the bargain, as a hint to him to keep his tongue between his teeth, if he didn't want to lose that also. Bah! I don't see what our captain is about."

"He might not have had any thing feasible on hand," expostulated Pietraccio.

"And he never will, if, instead of attending to business, he keeps going to the village to meet that prior, Father Francesco. I wonder if the old monk is trying to convert him."

"Convert him? What do you mean?" asked Pietraccio in great surprise.

"Induce him to desert and betray us. Such things have happened before now," replied Maso with a sly, insinuating sneer.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Pietraccio, somewhat indignant at the suspicions hinted against his chief.

"Yes, indeed! Have you never heard of the chief Tagliarico, who, after leading a company for twenty years, and accumulating a large fortune, came to terms with the Neapolitan Government, betrayed all his followers (who were either executed or sent to the galleys), and retired with his booty and a pension from the government, to enjoy life in the island of Ischia?" [1]

"That may be true, but I don't believe our captain capable of such treachery. I have not followed him for fifteen years for nothing. You wrong him, Maso." Pietraccio said this with fierce resentment, growling like a bull-dog in defence of his master.

"I don't say he would do such a piece of treachery: I think him a man of honor," Maso hastened to say, to soothe the rising temper of

[1] Historical.

Pietraccio; but still he added slyly, "You cannot deny, however, that he has deposited large sums of money with a Roman banking-house; for he neither gambles, drinks, nor spends his money, as liberally as we do."

"Well, I don't see that he is to be blamed because he is more prudent than any of us."

At this point their conversation was interrupted by a noisy dispute in one of the groups of men playing at dice. A short, thick-set young fellow, black as a Moor, his eyes rolling with murderous passion, launching most opprobrious epithets mingled with oaths at one of his companions, was attempting to strike him with a long, pointed, double-edged knife, but was with difficulty held back by two or three of the others; while his opponent, a calm, resolute man, answering back insult for insult, and oath for oath, held a similar knife ready for the attack. Pietraccio and Maso, hastily drawing from their side-pockets similar knives, and opening them as quick as lightning, rushed between the contestants, crying, —

"Hold on! hold on! Down with your knives,

or we will cut you into mince-meat! What is the row?"

"He is a thief and a liar!" shouted the short man. "He cheated me: I bet on the odds, and the dice counted nine."

"He is the liar!" retorted the other. "They were ten, and here are the witnesses," appealing to the men beside him.

"Here are other witnesses then, you ——!" strengthening his assertion by a storm of bad words, and turning to the men who stood around him. "Was it nine, or ten?" But no one on either side pretended to have noticed the throw, and only held on to each combatant, that they might not come to blows while in the heat of the quarrel; so that the two continued to hurl defiance and oaths, and struggled to get free to rush upon each other. The women had quitted their occupations at the beginning of the quarrel, and stood on some rocks near, watching with interest, though calmly, as if used to such scenes.

Pietraccio, finally, when they had exhausted their vocabulary of invective, cried, "Enough! What was the stake?"

"Four *scudi*."

"Who has got the money?"

"I have," said the tall man. "I won it fairly."

"Hand it to me," said Pietraccio authoritatively, holding out his left hand, but grasping his still opened knife in his right.

"But I" — began the man, protesting against the surrender of the stakes. But Pietraccio, whose left hand was extended, with a sudden movement seized the fellow by the throat with a grip that almost strangled him, and, brandishing his knife over his head, exclaimed with a terrible oath, "Am I the second in command here, or not? I'll cut your throat, if you don't obey me instantly!"

It is a curious fact, that men who have cut loose from society and law, and returned, so to speak, to the original savage state, independent of all restraint, the moment they band together, even as robbers and assassins, institute rules and laws among themselves far more despotic and absolute than those against which they have rebelled, and obey them with the utmost readiness and fidelity. These men were

all armed, and were hardened criminals, — probably there was not one among them who had not committed murder, — and yet not one of them dared to resist the high-handed proceedings of Pietraccio, not even the one attacked, who let his open knife drop to the ground, and, taking the four *scudi* from his pocket, handed them humbly to Pietraccio, saying in a gruff voice, "There is no need to choke me. Here is the money."

Pietraccio let go his hold, took the money, and put it in his pocket, then, stooping, picked up the knife that the man had dropped, and handed it to him, saying, "Learn, next time that I give an order, to obey me instantly. Here, take your knife, and fight it out like a man."

"Yes, that is right, that is right! Let them fight it out like men!" cried the bystanders, and at once formed a ring round the combatants. The women became more interested, and mounted higher rocks, in order to have a good view of the duel, very much as their ancestresses would have done at a gladiatorial fight in the Colosseum.

The two men took off their jackets, and wrapped them over their left arms, using them as the old Roman legionaries did a shield, and, with their long knives in their right hands, stood on guard, awaiting the signal.

These knife-fights, among these people, are real duels, with stringent rules and regulations. They are attended by two seconds, each with a similar knife, ready to interfere if any of these rules are violated. The knives themselves are peculiar, the blade, about ten inches long, being double-edged from the middle to the very sharp point: the upper half has a thick back, though the edge is still sharp. It is very wide in the middle, narrowing to the base, where it is fastened into a curved horn handle, with a strong spring, which, when drawn back, allows it to fold up like a jack-knife. It is generally worn at the side, in a pocket made especially for that purpose. When open, it is grasped by the middle of the handle, and is as formidable as the ancient short sword of the Romans, fit only for very close combat. It is characteristic of these people, that, though armed to the teeth with stilettos,

revolvers, and carbines, or short guns, they consider it a mark of cowardice to use any weapon, in their personal fights, but this traditional knife.

As the two men took their positions facing each other, about three feet apart, Pietraccio took his place, knife in hand, near the smaller man, ordering Maso to stand by the other, saying, "Beware! There shall be no home thrusts." This meant that they would not be allowed to strike at the neck or stomach, but only at the chest or arms; for, though they resorted to these fights to settle their quarrels and exercise their courage, they were very loath to lose lives, as each death was a loss to the band not easily replaced.

At a signal from Pietraccio, the two men stood a while motionless, watching each other, their left arms raised high in front of their faces, so that barely the eyes and nose were visible, the heavy, cumbrous jackets falling loosely before their breasts. The weight of the body was thrown upon the left foot, which was firmly planted a little in advance, the right being poised so as to spring forward, or back,

or round, as needed. They were both remarkably expert in this sort of combat, their eyes steadily holding each other like two snakes, watching the opportunity to strike.

By degrees they began to move in a semicircle, slowly and warily at first; then, quick as lightning, and simultaneously, they sprang forward, aiming a powerful blow at the left breast of their opponent, but they both parried it with their shielded left arms, and returned to their first guard. Their companions stood watching their movements with eager interest, not saying a word, but manifesting their approval with their expressive black eyes, as if merely witnessing an exhibition of fencing: the women, crowding upon a large, high rock, showed intense excitement and animation by look and gesture.

The men were not exactly matched: for the tall one was calm and concentrated; while the short fellow, who had begun the trouble by accusing the other of cheating, was quick and excitable. After some time spent in this watching, with occasional assaults, this latter began a course of rapid attacks, which his an-

tagonist calmly and effectually parried without striking back, as the younger wished, to bring him to close quarters. Irritated at this, he struck more furiously, and, in his excitement, aimed a blow at the other's neck. This, less carefully guarded against, might have taken effect, had not Pietraccio, with a quick movement of his knife, diverted the blow, crying, "No home thrusts! No home thrusts!" while Maso interfered also, to prevent his principal from striking his antagonist before he could recover himself, saying, "Halt, halt! Have a rest now: you are getting too excited."

"It was not fair to strike at my neck," said the tall man.

"I did not mean to," said the other apologetically.

"You get too excited, and do not know what you are about," said Pietraccio, then added, in a tone of authority, "You must keep cool, and follow the rules. I shall not let you off so easy next time."

"Come, let us have it over," said Maso cynically; for he did not care who was hurt or killed, so that it was done with, for he was tired of it.

The men resumed their places, went through the same evolutions; the young fellow got excited again, and aimed blow after blow, which the other easily parried, and, watching his chance, took a sudden step forward, and, bending to the right, struck his adversary in the fleshy part of the arm, just below the shoulder. At sight of the blood, the two seconds cried, "Halt!" and the fight terminated. Pietraccio stepped between them, saying, "That is enough: you have behaved like men;" and, taking the four *scudi* out of his pocket, he continued, "Here: there was a dispute in the game; and we don't know who was right and who was wrong, so we will call it a drawn game. Here are your two *scudi*. — And here are yours. Let us hear no more of it." He handed them the money, and bade the women attend to the wound. They found it a deep flesh wound, which, expert as they seemed to be in attending to such casualties, they held together to arrest the flow of blood, and brought from the cave lint, salve, and plasters, and in a very short time had dressed and bandaged it as well as any surgeon could have done.

This done, Pietraccio ordered the combatants to give each other the kiss of peace. The fight and the blood-letting had exhausted their strength, and apparently their animosity as well; for they both got up readily, and, without shaking hands (a custom entirely unknown among those people), embraced, and kissed each other on each cheek, while the rest stood by approving, and giving due praise for the skill and courage displayed in the encounter.

A little while after, when the several groups had settled down again to their games or occupations, a shrill, peculiar whistle was heard, a warning of some approaching danger, at sound of which every man started to his feet, and seized his gun. A shepherd-boy shortly after appeared, and reported to Pietraccio that a party of four travellers, three men and one woman, were climbing the mountain in that direction, and he thought it best to come and warn them.

"Three men and a woman! There may be a chance for a good haul," suggested Maso.

"But our chief has forbidden us to make a capture without his orders," said Pietraccio.

"Yes, if we organized and planned it; but if these people come here, and put themselves into our very hands, we ought not to lose the chance of a good round sum, which we might get from them. Besides, who knows but they may be spies to discover our hiding-place?"

Maso let slip the word "spies," knowing well the powerful effect it had on such outlaws. "Spies!" cried Pietraccio fiercely. "Spies!" cried the others, their hands instinctively grasping their stilettos; and all seemed ready to rush pell-mell, and tear the suspected spies to pieces. But the boy assured them that they were painters; for he had seen them stop half way up to sketch, and he had waited until they had started again in that direction.

"At any rate, let us go and see what they are, and whether they are worth capturing," said Pietraccio; and with a wave of the hand he ordered the women and the wounded man to go into the grotto and shut the door, and he with the others, by twos and threes, winding among the crags of the mountain by intricate pathways fit only for goats or mountaineers shod with sheepskins, silently and cautiously came down from the summit.

It was a door of very remarkable construction which the women closed after them as they entered the grotto. It consisted of a rough, massive stone, set on a strong iron frame, revolving on powerful hinges, and projecting irregularly on the outside, so that, when shut, it matched so closely and naturally the rocky ledge in which it was fitted, that it showed no trace of its existence, even the grass and moss growing in its crevices as in the solid rock.

CHAPTER X.

AN ITALIAN SUNRISE.

MR. NORMAN and his party had now been several days at Sonnino, occupying themselves in sketching views of the Campania, and making occasional excursions to old ruins or sanctuaries in the neighborhood. They were lodged in the Foresteria of the Capuchin Convent; that is, Mr. Norman, Edith, and Valerio: for Father Francesco had desired Silvio to occupy his usual room in the convent. The Foresteria was a small building outside the monastery, such as is found attached to every country convent in Italy, for the accommodation of ladies and their parties. Their meals were furnished from the convent kitchen, and were superior to those of the average hotels; Father Francesco, or some other of the fathers, joining them at their noon meal, and staying with them through the afternoon.

A few days after their arrival, Father Francesco asked Mr. Norman to a private interview in his cell, while the young people were off sketching.

"Dear Mr. Norman," said he, as soon as he had carefully shut the door, "I have good news to give you, though not all I could wish. Still, it is enough for us to act upon. I know the name of Silvio's mother: but I had to give my sacred word of honor that I would never, either directly or indirectly, seek to find out any thing more in regard either to her or her history; and this promise I must also exact from you before I reveal it."

"Certainly! I will give you my word of honor; but I do not see what help the knowledge is to us."

"I will explain. First of all, accepting your promise to seek no further to discover her history, I will tell you that her name was Silvia di Montalba, of a noble family in the Abruzzi, who died in giving birth to our Silvio. This knowledge is all-important to us, first, because it proves that Silvio is of gentle birth," — Father Francesco laid much stress upon this fact,

unaware that to an American it was of no importance whatever, whether Silvio was the son of a noble lady or a peasant-girl, compared to the doubt of his legitimacy, which all this secrecy seemed to imply; but a European, even a Catholic priest, thinks differently, and seems to consider that blue blood has privileges over any other; "secondly, on the strength of that knowledge, I can ask for a Papal dispensation for Silvio to assume his mother's name, and thus remove the stigma of illegitimacy that now attaches to him. I have influence in the Papal court, and am sure of obtaining it; in which case I see no reason why Miss Edith should not marry him."

Mr. Norman considered for a while, but finally replied, "I see no objection myself, but I cannot decide without consulting my daughter."

"Consult your daughter!" exclaimed Father Francesco, surprised, as an Italian naturally would be, that a father should consult his daughter about such a subject. "Can she be trusted with the secret?"

"Oh! do not be afraid," replied Mr. Norman, smiling. "Our daughters are differently

brought up from Italian girls, and you can trust her as fully as myself."

"In that case, we might as well have a sort of family consultation, with Silvio, and even Valerio."

They repaired to the Foresteria; and, when the young people returned, they talked the matter over, and settled it satisfactorily, that, as soon as the Papal dispensation was obtained, the engagement of Silvio di Montalba to Edith Norman should be made public, and the marriage take place soon after. Father Francesco remained to supper with them, and five happier people it would have been hard to find in all Italy.

When the convent bell rang the Ave Maria, calling the monks to evening prayer, the good father, as he rose to go, took the young people by the hands, saying, "God bless you! This is the happiest day of my life; for I have lived to see my beloved ward Silvio affianced to such a good and loving bride. God bless you both!"

Silvio and Edith soon followed, leaving Mr. Norman and Valerio to their cigars. They did not, however, enter the church, but went round

to an esplanade behind it, shaded by very old trees, overlooking a picturesque precipice on the slope of the mountain, and the distant plains of the Campania. They sat there for a time absorbed in sweet thoughts. The sun had set; and the short Italian twilight was fast merging into darkness, each feature of the vast panorama stretched out before them gradually becoming indistinct. The church bell sounded the last stroke of the evening Ave Maria, its echo faintly dying among the distant ledges of the mountain. Silvio, sensitive to the impressions of the hour, repeated softly, in the original Italian, those beautiful verses of Dante which suggested to Gray the first line of his plaintive Elegy: —

"'Twas now the hour that brings to men at sea,
Who in the morn have bid sweet friends farewell,
Fond thoughts and longing back with them to be,
And thrills the pilgrim with a tender spell
Of love, if haply now upon his way
He faintly hear a chime from some far bell,
That seems to mourn the dying of the day."

The sadness of his tone troubled Edith. She looked tenderly into his soft blue eyes, and

said, "You still seem sad. What makes you so? Can I do any thing more to make you happy?"

Silvio raised his head with a quick movement, as if to shake off his melancholy thoughts, replying, "More! What more could you do for me, sweet Madonna? Your generous consent to be mine, even under present conditions, is a proof of love such as only the angels in heaven can appreciate. I am almost bewildered by it. I fear that it cannot be true, that I am still dreaming, that it is an illusion of my excited imagination." Then taking her hand, as if to assure himself that it was real, he continued, "You do love me, then, the outcast, the unknown? And will be mine in spite of all?—you, so lovely, so gifted? The adoration of a lifetime cannot repay your generosity. Make me more happy! Not unless you wish to kill me; for joy can kill, as well as grief. I am happy now, too happy, maybe; for I feel a vague presentiment of impending evil. Such exquisite happiness cannot last. Oh! why is real happiness so akin to sorrow? Can you realize that I feel now as if death itself would

be welcome? for, having experienced such supreme bliss, the loss of it would be more dreadful than death. Oh, I love you too much, too much!"

Edith listened calmly to this wild Italian outpouring of love, which, though true in its intensity, was extravagant in its expression, and replied quietly, —

"You cannot love me too much, Silvio, and certainly not more than I do you; only we do not say all we feel, while you Italians sometimes say more. I do not mean you, dear Silvio. I do not think for a moment you do not mean what you say; but you remember the Italian song, '*Quest' è delirio, non è l'amore*' ('This is delirium, it is not love'). I had rather you should love me than rave about me. And, as to my generosity, what is it? That I am willing to marry you without knowing who your father was. What is that to me? You have a name, and a good one, and that is enough. Do you suppose that when we are married, and visit America, my friends will ask who your ancestors were? We care nothing about that: it is the man himself who must be

worthy of honor; and Silvio di Montalba, by his eminent qualities both as artist and man, would make any woman proud to be called his wife."

There could be no better example of the contrast in the nature of these two lovers than the above conversation, — Silvio full of Italian fire and poetry; Edith, of self-control and reason. Silvio watched her with admiration: he read in her eyes the real depth of her love, though her words might sound cold.

"You are more than angel!" he exclaimed. "You are one of the cherubim, the celestial powers who preside over the human intellect."

She laughed a little, not displeased, for all her American calmness. "I suppose you cannot help talking poetry: it is in your nature. Otherwise you would not be the artist you are. Come, let us talk of something else. Let me look at your mother's miniature."

"It is too dark, I am afraid."

"Oh, no! It is light enough for me to see it."

Silvio unclasped it from its chain, and gave it to her, saying, "I grieve to think where my portrait of her can be. Who could have stolen it, or, rather, taken it?"

"Some admirer of your talent, Silvio. Who else would have left such a good price for it? But why do you care so much? Here you have the original, and can easily copy it again. How beautiful she must have been!"

"Still it does worry me. Who could wish for my mother's portrait enough, even, to take it by force? There seems to me something mysterious about it."

"My dear Silvio, your mind has been so exercised of late, that you are getting morbid, and see mysteries and snares everywhere. My love must try and cure you, and help you drive these dark fancies away. Come, we had better go into the house; for to-morrow we must be up at dawn, to see the sunrise from the Castellaccio, and sketch it."

"Yes: drive them away. That is what Father Francesco used to say to me, but without effect. You have more power than he; for the thought of you and your love dispels all gloomy fancies like mist before the rising sun."

Long before daylight the next morning our party of four were roused by a half-grown boy, who, leaving his four saddled donkeys in the courtyard of the Foresteria, went up the stone staircase, and knocked, saying that it was time to start. They rose quickly, took a hasty cup of coffee, and, with their saddle-bags filled with materials for a substantial lunch, and their painting apparatus, started for the mountain. It was yet quite dark; so that the boy, acting as guide, led Valerio's donkey, the others following in single file. They went only a short distance up the mountain-road, then turning to the right, into a mere winding footpath, ascended an elevation so steep, that they had to cling to the pommel of their saddles to save themselves from sliding off; but the animals, sure-footed, and accustomed to such climbing, picked their way upward slowly but safely.

They continued their ascent for over an hour in complete darkness, and a silence only interrupted by an occasional cry of the mountain-boy to the donkeys, accompanied by a violent jerk of the bridle. They seemed to pay little attention to it, however, and jogged along at

the same pace. Mr. Norman, who brought up the rear, would call out now and then, "Halloo, there! Are we all together?" And Edith, who rode next to Valerio, would reply, "We are all right, papa." The air was growing cooler and more rarefied, though not chilly; and it was so invigorating, that, the higher they went, the stronger they seemed to feel. Right and left, among the slopes and crags of the mountain, grew large olive and almond trees, which, almost bare of leaves, looked like so many giants stretching out their huge arms in the darkness.

Suddenly a faint glimmer of light brightened the eastern sky, while the earth beneath grew even darker by contrast. At the same moment our travellers felt a soft breath of air, impregnated with odors of oleander and jessamine, orange-blossoms and wild roses, arising from the valleys beneath, like a thanksgiving which earth offered to its Creator for the blessing of the new morn. They stopped by one impulse, and gazed in silence, while the rose-color changed to orange, and the summits of the Apennines marked more and more dis-

tinctly their dark outlines against the brightening skies. Then Edith turned to Silvio, who was close behind her, exclaiming, "This is perfectly divine!" To which Silvio, absorbed in admiration, replied, "It is the Italian Aurora which inspired Guido."

Soon after, they reached a level spot, where was a rustic sanctuary of a Madonna against a projecting cliff encircled by rough stone seats. This was the resting-place where they were to view the sunrise. It commanded a vast expanse of the Roman Campania, and a range of the Apennines stretching for many miles. They alighted from their saddles, and, sitting on the benches, watched the wonderful changes of color in earth and sky. There were only a few thin clouds in the east, which, as the light of the sun reached them, had changed from orange to almost transparent gold. The highest peaks of the mountains, struck first by the sun's rays, were of a deep fiery red, like so many burning volcanoes. The valleys beneath began to show various shades and colors, which were soon distinguishable as woods or cultivated fields, villages here and there perched

on the hills, white farmhouses with the smoke curling up in gray columns from their chimneys. The distant Campania, level as a North-American prairie, gave the impression of a sea, broken only by the cupola of St. Peter's, that loomed up on the horizon. While they watched, an aureola encircled it, like the halo round the head of a saint; and the sun suddenly sprang up directly behind it, changing the whole scene in a moment. The dark shades of the valleys, the pearly tints of morning twilight, the exquisite and varied colors of the sky, turned to a glitter of gems and gold, of light and brilliancy. A light mist that rose from the valleys sparkled like silver gauze, irradiating, not hiding, the fields below. What had seemed fiery volcanoes were now cones of precious stones, the dew of the morning reflecting from the basaltic rocks of the barren peaks the prismatic colors with dazzling radiance. As the sun still rose, these colors grew warmer and deeper, till they burst into the valleys an effulgent torrent of light and blessing.

Our party sat silently enjoying this wonderful sight, unwilling to break the spell even by

an exclamation of delight; for, when souls are deeply moved, silence is the best appreciation. Silvio expressed how deeply he felt the inspiration of the moment only by a gentle pressure of Edith's hand. Valerio was the first to speak, exclaiming, —

"I am going to burn palette and brush, and turn actor! What is the use of being a landscape painter? You may paint the human form so perfectly as even to improve upon nature; but where is the artist who can fitly represent this celestial vision on canvas? Talk of Poussin, Claude, Cimarosa! what have they given us compared to this? Daubs: not the faintest reflection or suggestion of the reality. Bah! I will turn actor!"

This sally made every one laugh; and Silvio said, —

"What is the matter with you? Has the morning air got into your head? Is that your respect for the great masters? You are talking sacrilege, especially before this sublime creation of nature."

"No, I mean no irreverence: on the contrary, it is because I admire and worship nature too

well, that I say no one should misrepresent her on canvas. I, for one, will not again commit such a sin. No more sunrises for me: a cluster of trees, a mill with a pretty waterfall, a field with cattle, the ruins of the aqueduct in the Campania, but no sunrises, or sunsets either."

"Why, Signor Valerio!" cried Edith, "I thought we came here for that express purpose. Didn't you say you wanted me to paint an Italian sunrise from nature?"

"Did I really? Yes, yes, I did; but I was an ass, — yes, a conceited ass." Valerio said this as if he was actually paying himself a compliment. "That is my only excuse for such presumption. But now, in face of this divine impossibility, I say to you, as your teacher, don't!"

They all laughed at his enthusiasm; but Mr. Norman, who felt somewhat chilled by the morning air, suggested, "Look here, young people: all this is superb, magnificent, but don't you think it is time to have something warm?"

"Yes," they all replied readily: "a cup of

coffee would be just the thing, though it is rather too early for lunch."

Valerio, who acted as a sort of factotum for the party, assisted by the boy, set a spirit-lamp burning, and warmed the coffee. They then proposed to ascend on foot to a ledge just under the cliffs of the so-called Castellaccio, which commanded a fine view of the right slope of the mountain and the distant Campania. Accordingly, they left the boy to look after the donkeys, and prepare the lunch for their return, and started, Valerio leading the way, with Edith's painting-materials. It was, however, a longer and more difficult tramp than they had imagined. On the way, they came upon a shepherd-boy watching a flock of sheep pasturing among the rocks. They asked him if they could easily reach the ledge under the cliff, and he replied in the affirmative; but they did not notice that this innocent-looking boy watched them closely as they climbed on, and, the moment they were out of sight, started at a run through intricate paths, and in less than half an hour was on the top of the Castellaccio, warning the brigands of their presence in the neighborhood.

When Valerio, after a fatiguing ascent, found himself the first upon the open space under the overhanging cliff, he exclaimed, "Come, come quick! Here is a landscape worthy of Claude Lorraine."

"Yes," replied Silvio, as he helped Edith on to level ground; "but it is the steepest ascent I ever attempted. I am all out of breath. I am afraid you will be all worn out, Miss Edith."

"Oh, no! I am a good climber, and the fatigue is well repaid by such a wonderful view."

"Ugh! ugh! view!" gasped Mr. Norman, panting for breath. "It may be wonderful for you young folks; but, as for me, it is absolute folly to attempt climbing such heights. I am perfectly used up." And he sat down, puffing and panting, on a huge stone.

"Oh, how sorry I am, papa! but you can have a long rest and smoke, for I mean to take a sketch here."

Valerio, who was setting up Edith's easel, observed, "A sketch, but no sunrise, Miss Edith, no sunrise." Then, offering his flask to

Mr. Norman, he said, "Take a sip: it will revive you."

"No, I thank you! no sour black wine and water for me. I have something stronger here." Saying which, he took a good pull from his own flask. Then he lighted a cigar, and, stretching himself out as comfortably as he could against the rock, gave himself up to the enjoyment of his smoke and the magnificent view.

Edith set to work eagerly; and for a time the silence was unbroken save by an occasional suggestion or word of praise from the young men, who, one on each side, watched her progress, and drew her attention to special points of interest in the glorious scene before them.

CHAPTER XI.

SURPRISES.

HALF an hour or more had our party remained undisturbed, Edith making fair progress with her sketch, the others finishing their cigars, when they were suddenly startled by a piercing whistle; and almost simultaneously some twenty men sprang from behind the rocks, and, before they could raise a finger, had surrounded them, crying, "Do not stir for your lives!"

The movement was so sudden, that it almost paralyzed them all, unconscious as they had been of any danger; but Mr. Norman, springing from his seat, knocked down the two men who were about to seize him, and rushed to Edith's protection, crying, "What! What is this? Oh! why did I leave my revolver behind?"

Valerio subsided at once, exclaiming, "Well, we are caught in a trap."

Edith, terror-stricken, threw herself into her father's arms, crying, "Who are they?" to which Silvio replied encouragingly, "Brigands, I suppose: but do not fear, my love; they want money only." At the same time he stood in front of her, with his mountain-stick in his hand, in an attitude of defence, useless as it seemed. Pietraccio walked quietly up to him, and, pointing a pistol at his head, said, "Drop that stick, young man: it will do you no good." Silvio obeyed at once; but Mr. Norman, helpless and unarmed though he was, and in spite of the danger of irritating the brigands, still protested angrily, "Don't touch me or my daughter, you villains! I will give you what money you demand, but let me take away my daughter."

Maso, presenting a pistol at him, said with his cynical laugh, "Keep cool, old man, keep cool. We will not hurt any of you, if you keep quiet: as to money, it is our chief who will set your ransom."

Silvio tried to quiet Mr. Norman, saying, "Resistance is useless, dear Mr. Nŏrman. We must submit. Money will easily settle this matter."

Valerio, who had sat down coolly, guarded by some of the brigands, observed, "Yes, easy enough for you; but I should like to know what money they will get out of me, who haven't a *scudo* in the world."

"We will squeeze some out of you, young man," replied Maso, with a grin that showed his splendid set of teeth. "Otherwise you will keep us company for the rest of your days." Saying this, he turned to look at Silvio, whose voice seemed familiar to him. Recognizing him, he turned quickly away, thinking to himself, "Confound it! The young painter of the portrait! I wonder if he can recognize me as I look now! How curious, if we should get those two thousand francs after all! But then, he is the painter our chief used to visit so often. I am afraid we have only made a hole in the water; but there is no remedy now."

Meanwhile, Pietraccio had ordered the prisoners to be blindfolded, which was quickly done, they offering no resistance; and Maso, leading Valerio first, took the way upward, followed by Mr. Norman and Edith, who clung to her father. Silvio came close behind them, and

the brigands kept as close around them as the nature of the ground permitted. Mr. Norman noticed, that though his bandage, consisting of a large silk handkerchief, completely obstructed his view forward, yet, by lowering his eyes, he could see the buttons of his vest, and the bunch of charms hanging from his watch-chain: among these there was an excellent little compass and a tiny gold pencil. With his American coolness and practical mind he devised a means to track his way. He held the compass level, though in a manner not to attract observation, and counted how many steps they took in any one direction, and marked it on his cuffs. A toilsome climb of half an hour or more brought them once more to level ground, where, after a few steps, they stopped. Mr. Norman heard distinctly the turning on its hinges of what must have been a very massive door; and, moving on, he felt that they had entered some dark vault or cave. They walked quietly on for some distance on a hard turf floor, and finally stopped. Pietraccio ordered the men to unblind the prisoners; and they found themselves in a large cavern, sufficiently lighted by a wide

opening of irregular form on one side, looking out over an inaccessible precipice. In a recess at the right was a low bed covered by a quilt made of sheep-skins; and over it hung a picture covered by a green veil, — a not unusual protection for valuable paintings where there is any danger of dampness. Opposite, between two groups of ancient weapons, hung a picture of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of highwaymen: before this a lamp was burning. A little farther off, three or four shelves held a few books and a number of flasks and decanters, goblets and glasses. These were of all varieties, — from silver and majolica of exquisite workmanship down to the coarsest ware. A few tables, holding pipes, tobacco-pouches, and what not, and some wooden stools and settees, completed the furniture of this grotto, reserved for the chief's use. Other openings, right and left, led to a labyrinth of similar grottos, occupied by the rest of the band.

The first feeling of our four prisoners, when their eyes were unbound, was that of relief, especially as they perceived four or five women, who crowded round Edith with wonder and

curiosity, as at a sight hitherto unknown in that place. Mr. Norman, provoked and indignant at having been so easily caught, cried, "Well, where are we? I protest, I will not stand this. What do you mean to do with us? I swear, I will make them all smart for this!" he added in English, shaking his fist at the whole crew of them.

"O papa! Do not irritate them. We are in their power now; and you do not know what they may do, if you make them angry."

"Do? What do you suppose they want to do, except extort money? It is a disgrace that such beings should exist in a civilized country. Oh! if I ruled here, I would stop it quickly enough by hanging the whole lot."

"Look here, old gentleman!" interrupted Maso, who always acted as the spokesman, "you can speak our language well enough; and we don't allow any foreign lingo among us. Now, remember! or you will be sorry for it."

Mr. Norman was so irritated by the man's impudent, sneering manner, that, yielding to his instinctive aversion, and regardless of consequences, he exclaimed in Italian, —

"Yes, I *can* speak your language; and I was saying, that, if I ruled in this country, I would soon have you all hung."

Edith rushed to put her hand over her father's mouth, crying, "O papa, papa! Don't!" Silvio and Valerio stood amazed at his daring to brave such a set of ruffians; but Maso took it quietly, even jocosely, though the others frowned.

"That's right, old gent! That's right! Ha, ha! Hang us all? Yes, when you catch us: so would the Pope. But for the present *we* have caught *you*, though we will not hang you. What do we care to see your fat body dancing on nothing? We will only squeeze some money out of you. Englishmen are rich." At this sally, all his companions laughed, appreciating Maso's wit.

"I am not English, I am an American," replied Mr. Norman with national pride.

"So much the better, so much the better!" sneered Maso. "The Americans, they say, are richer than the English. Plenty of gold in America. I should like to go there; and who knows but I may some day?"

"I wish you were there: you would soon be at the end of a rope."

"O papa, papa!" pleaded Edith. "Please don't talk so to them."

"I am not afraid of them," cried Mr. Norman, who was in a state of intense irritation.

"Afraid!" said Maso, who seemed to enjoy the verbal contest, as indeed did the other brigands, who stood around them, proud that one of their number could argue with an educated gentleman. "Why should you be afraid of us? We will not touch a hair of your heads. Do you take us for assassins? Money is what we want. Come, Pietraccio, assure them that we mean no personal harm."

"Do your own talking," replied Pietraccio gruffly. "I am a man of action, not of talk. You are the lawyer of the company."

"Lawyer!" exclaimed Valerio, who was much interested in the conversation, and admired Mr. Norman's fearless attitude. "Have you a lawyer in your band?"

"Yes, young man; and in me you behold him," replied Maso, with an affected, pompous air.

Silvio, who was standing close behind Edith, was struck by the sound of the man's voice, which he thought he had heard before, and, scrutinizing his face, he was convinced that he had seen it; but the rough, half-grown beard altered it so, that he could not exactly remember when or where.

Here Pietraccio interrupted the conversation, saying, —

"Come, Maso, the prisoners must be tired."

"Why, yes!" rejoined Maso; and, with an attempt at refined manners, he addressed them: "Come, sit down, and take a glass of wine. Have you had any thing to eat this morning? What! No? Here, Clelia, Marcia! Get something ready at once, whatever our poor larder can afford, — eggs, ham, mutton, and some good wine. That I can guarantee. You cannot find better anywhere."

The women bustled about; and, in a short time, a rustic repast was served which would have done credit to the best Italian country tavern. The captives were tired and hungry after their morning ride and subsequent exciting tramp; and, being now somewhat assured

that no personal harm threatened them, they sat down to it with some relish, Mr. Norman observing, —

"Well, I never met brigands before; and, if these are a specimen, they are not so bad after all. As long as they don't treat us badly, money will settle the rest."

When they had finished eating, the two women who had been called by the old Roman names of Clelia and Marcia, — superb specimens of pure Roman peasants, with powerful necks and chests, and proud heads, and who had been the foremost in attending the table, — noticing that Edith took no wine, said to her, —

"Take a glass of wine, signorina: it will do you good."

"Thank you! I never drink wine at breakfast."

"But do take some: you must be exhausted."

To please them, she sipped a little, then asked if she might go and look out. "Certainly," they replied, and accompanied her to the irregular opening already mentioned, where Edith sat breathing the fresh mountain air, and

looking out over the fine distant view, while the two women spoke to each other in low tones, but loud enough for her to hear.

"What a beautiful lady! Her hair is like gold!"

"And her skin like rose-leaves!"

"So different from our women!"

"It must be so soft!" and Clelia, softly stroking Edith's hair, which was drawn back in a large coil, said, "As smooth as silk!"

And Marcia, lightly rubbing her finger over Edith's hand, that rested on the back of the settee, exclaimed, "As soft as butter!"

The touch startled Edith, whose nerves had been somewhat unstrung by the fear and excitement of the last few hours, and she cried, "Oh! Don't touch me! don't touch me! If you want my rings, I will give them to you; but don't touch me." And, taking off the two rings she had on that hand, she handed one to each.

"Oh how beautiful! Oh how splendid!" cried the two women together. Maso and Pietraccio, attracted by their exclamations, drew near, saying, —

"Halloo! What are you doing? Taking the lady's rings?"

"You forget that it is against the rules to take any thing without orders from our captain."

"We did not take them: the signorina gave them to us."

"Yes, I gave them to you," acknowledged Edith; "but do not let those men come near me."

"Don't be afraid: they would not hurt you." Then, turning to the two men, they gave them such a push with their strong arms, that they staggered back a step or two, saying at the same time, "Get away: don't come near the signorina."

Maso showed his white teeth in a broad grin, and said, "Don't growl. Nobody wants to touch your pretty doll;" while Pietraccio the silent, as if pleased at this violence on his wife's part, laughed, crying, "Jealous! jealous! I can't look at a woman, but she flares up." And they rejoined the group round the table.

Edith sat down again, and the two women at each side of her gazed at her in perfect

admiration. Silvio came towards her, saying,—

"I wish I could paint you now, you make such a charming contrast between those sunburnt peasants."

"Yes, indeed!" observed Valerio aside to Silvio, "an angel between two thieves."

Mr. Norman came up, glass in hand, exclaiming, "Well, I must say these brigands keep a very good wine." Then drinking it, and putting down the goblet, he turned to Maso, saying, "Come, how long are we to be kept here?"

Maso turned upon him quickly, as if about to say, "You are too bold, considering the position you are in;" but there was something so manly and brave in his bearing, so different from what they had been accustomed to when they had captured other elderly men, that it rather pleased the sleek rascal: so he replied politely, "Till our captain comes. You must settle matters with him."

"It makes me so mad to be caught in such a trap!" said Mr. Norman impatiently.

"We must have patience, Mr. Norman," said

Valerio good-humoredly; "and, as long as we are here, we may as well make the best of it. — I say, lawyer," turning to Maso, "how came you to be a brigand?"

Maso seemed highly pleased at being asked the question; and striking an attitude as if about to deliver an oration, and putting in an occasional Latin word to show that he had studied, he began, —

"*Fatalitas*, my boy, *fatalitas!* When a boy I was articled to a lawyer; but, as I was fonder of billiards than of the pandects of Justinian, the old scoundrel used to apply the rod to my back oftener than was at all agreeable. When I was about nineteen, I felt that I could stand it no longer. One morning I lost at billiards five francs, which he had given me to buy paper; and he applied it with more than usual violence. I lost my patience; and, happening to have my stiletto with me, I drew it to frighten him. Instead of that, he struck the harder, and tried to wrench it from my hand. *Quod agitur!* What would you have done? I stuck it under his fifth rib; and, before he could say, "*Miserere me Deus*," he dropped

dead. *Horresco referens!* I really did not mean to kill the old rascal; but, after the thing was done, what could I do? Stay, and be hung or sent to the galleys? I escaped to the mountains, and here I am." And, turning to the men crowding near, he said with a low bow, "*Plaudite omnes!*" His companions cried out, "Bravo, Maso, well spoken! You were born for a *predicatore*" (preacher). "*Del diavolo!*" suggested Valerio in a low tone to Silvio. "Impudent ruffian!" thought Mr. Norman to himself; but still, curious to learn more of these people, he asked, "I suppose your companions are here for similar causes?"

"Well, pretty much the same," said Maso. Then, turning to the second in command, he added, "Here, Pietraccio, *favete linguis.* Tell the gentleman why you are with us."

Pietraccio, who had been listening complacently with the others, drew back confused at this direct attack.

"I? Tell it yourself," he said roughly. "I am no talker."

"Yes, yes! you tell it: you are the lawyer," cried the others, who took a lively interest in

the conversation. Maso bowed with an affected grimace, and resumed, —

"That is very true, Pietraccio: when a pistol or a poniard is needed, then you are the first on hand; but, when it is a question of brains, you reply, like the Pope, '*Non possumus.*' *Breviter,* this is his story. Pietraccio was in love with Clelia, but there was a rival who tried to insinuate himself into her graces. He challenged him: they fought with knives, and Pietraccio killed his adversary. '*Mortuus est. Requiescat in pace.*' Had they fought with swords or pistols, society would have called it a duel; and the thing would have passed off as merely an affair of honor, and the survivor, after a few months of expatriation, would have returned with the applause of the community. But because we fight with knives, they call it murder, assassination, and what not, and send us to the gallows for it. Society calls this *law,* — made for the poor, and not for the rich; but so much the worse for them, for now we are above the law. Pietraccio married Clelia, and brought her here, and she is as good as any of us. The others

are all, more or less, in the same predicament. But the chief inducement that holds us together is *money:* as Virgil says, '*Quid non mortalia pectora cogis, Auri sacra fames?*'"

With this last flourish he closed, while his companions cried out, "Bravo, bravo!"

In the midst of the noise there was heard a loud whistle from the outer passage; and Pietraccio cried, "Here is our captain!"

Our party waited in anxious expectation to see the man who had them in his power. Edith rose from the window, and ran to her father's side in nervous agitation. The brigands stood round the passage in respectful attitudes, the five women in the background watching curiously to see what effect the sight of such a formidable man would have on the prisoners. There was a moment of intense suspense, then suddenly, from the dark passage, appeared the imposing form of Leone.

My young readers may expect that I should describe the picturesque and gorgeous costume of a brigand chief according to the stage traditions of that famous personage; but as my characters are all drawn from nature, and not

from romance or the stage, I must state that he was dressed in the plain gray hunting-suit commonly worn by hunters in the Campania, with his double-barrelled gun hanging by its strap over his shoulders, and followed by two superb hounds. No one, meeting him out on the hills or in the plains, could have supposed but that he was a gentleman out hunting with his dogs.

The astonishment of Silvio and Valerio, at the sight of their supposed old model in his true character of brigand chief, can be more easily imagined than described. Bewildered by surprise, they gasped out, "Antonio! Is it possible!"

"Antonio? No: Leone, captain of the Campania and Apulia," exclaimed Maso with boastful pride. The surprise, however, seemed to have communicated itself to Leone, who, at the unexpected sight of Silvio and his companions, started back, exclaiming, "What! Silvio! Valerio! How is this?" And turning upon Pietraccio and Maso, who stood in advance of the rest, he asked fiercely, with the look of a lion ready to spring, "How came these people here?"

Pietraccio, as second in command, replied submissively, "They entered our territory unawares, and we made them prisoners without any trouble. The foreigner and his daughter must be rich people: so there may be a good ransom. Maso advised the capture."

"You have disobeyed the rule that no capture should be undertaken without my orders," said the chief sternly. Maso, having been mentioned as the adviser of the deed, felt that he ought to defend it: so he spoke out, —

"Your orders may be well and good, captain; but, when an opportunity like this offered, we could not wait for orders, and this surely was an exception."

"I admit of no exception to my rules, and I will see to it that you do not disregard them in future," replied Leone in a tone of suppressed anger.

"But, captain" — resumed Maso, who, as the lawyer of the band, was ever ready to argue; but Leone cut him short with an authoritative, "Enough! Stand back! Off with you all; for these people are my guests, not my prisoners."

They dispersed in different directions, though many still remained in sight in the adjoining grottos. As Maso walked off with Pietraccio, he said in a low tone, "It is of no use: he is getting demoralized. Such an opportunity of getting thousands of *scudi*, accomplished without any trouble or risk, and he throws it away! There is something wrong. That old monk, I fear"—and they went into the next cave, though still in sight of the party, and sat on a bench, talking to each other.

Leone hastened to Silvio, and, taking him affectionately by the hand to re-assure him, exclaimed, "Signor Silvio, I am so sorry this should have happened. I knew that you were in this neighborhood, but I had no idea that you would come so near our den."

"Father Francesco had assured me that there was not the slightest danger for any one here."

"He was right. No one ever dares to commit a capture in my neighborhood; and it only happened now through disobedience to my orders, which I shall certainly punish. But you and your friends are now free, and at liberty to

go anywhere about here without fear of molestation."

Leone did not say why there was no danger of capture in the neighborhood of the brigands' hiding-place; but the reason was, that such captures would attract the attention of the police to that locality, and discovery might ensue.

Silvio's surprise was so great at discovering that his favorite model, whom he used to turn and twist about like a puppet, was such a redoubtable chief, that he could hardly ask the question that rose to his lips.

"You are, then, the famous Leone, the terror of the Papal States? But what induced you to come to me so many years as a model?"

Leone expected some such question, and had an answer ready. "Oh! it was at first an excuse to disguise myself when I was in Rome. Afterwards I took a fancy to you and your paintings. You may think it strange, but I am very fond of works of art. Now, you must consider yourself here among friends; but let me re-assure your companions."

Valerio stood near, listening with amazement, and thought to himself, "Curious fancy for a

brigand; but I fear there is some mystery under it all."

Leone turned to Edith, and, with a politeness and gallantry totally unexpected in such a person, said to her, "I am exceedingly sorry, dear young lady, that any thing should have happened to mar the pleasure of your morning excursion. I hope you were not much frightened." Then to Mr. Norman he continued, "I regret this disturbance deeply, my dear sir; but, since you are here, I hope you will make yourself at home. Will you take a glass of wine?"

Mr. Norman was so taken aback by the courteous manner of the chief, and the contrast he offered to the rest of the band, especially after his late irritation and excitement, that he replied involuntarily, as he would have done to a friend, —

"No, I thank you: I have already enjoyed some of your excellent wine; but, if you will allow us to go, I give you my word to remit immediately whatever ransom we may agree upon."

"Ransom!" replied Leone with an offended

air. "I said that you were my guests, not my prisoners."

"What! you mean to liberate us without ransom?"

"Certainly."

Maso, who was sitting with Pietraccio in the adjoining cave, but near enough to hear the conversation, whispered in his ear, "I tell you, our captain is surely crazy. Just think what a chance! Here is the old gentleman ready and willing to shell out any amount of *scudi*, and he lets them go scot-free. I tell you, there is certainly something wrong."

"Well!" said Mr. Norman, amazed at the turn of events. "You are the strangest sort of brigand I ever heard of."

Edith, who could hardly realize their safety, said earnestly, "Then let us go away from here at once, papa. — Silvio, let us go immediately."

"Fear not, my dear young lady," said Leone soothingly, and taking her hand, much to her dismay, for she felt almost as if it were in the paws of a real lion. "You are as safe here as in your own house. Signor Silvio was always kind to me, though he knew not who I was; and

any friend of his is under my special protection."

At this declaration Mr. Norman could not help remarking in a low tone to Valerio, "Good gracious! He talks as if he were the ruler of the land."

"As to that, Mr. Norman, he is, until he is caught."

"You must all be tired," continued Leone. "Why cannot you rest a little longer, and have a cup of coffee or some wine before you go?"

"As long as we are here, we might just as well get rested, since our host is so hospitable," laughed the light-hearted Valerio, always ready to take life easily. "We have not had our smoke yet, and I see some excellent pipes here."

They all followed his advice, and sat down again; some filling pipes, Mr. Norman passing round his cigar-case, while the women brought cups for coffee, and glasses for cordials. And, while the strangely assorted party sat interchanging the courtesies of host and guests, Silvio, who sat near Valerio, still half-bewildered, whispered to him, —

"I do not understand his excessive fondness for me."

"Nor I; but take the good as it comes, and ask no questions. What would be the use?"

Mr. Norman said to Edith aside, in English, "Well, I declare! this is the most curious adventure I ever met with in my life."

"Yes: it will be something to tell, when we go home to America, that we were captured by brigands, and not only let off without ransom, but actually entertained."

Mr. Norman, while smoking his cigar, surveyed the place with curiosity, glancing occasionally at his compass to get the exact bearings. While doing so, he noticed the group of weapons hanging at each side of the picture of St. Nicholas: so he went to examine them more closely, saying, "You have some curious old weapons here."

Valerio, who had risen at the same time, remarked, "And a painting from a good old master."

Edith and Silvio also rose to see the picture; and he confirmed Valerio's opinion that it was really the work of an old master, and they won-

dered where he could have got it. Edith had noticed also the picture protected by the green veil, and, supposing that it might also be some valuable painting, asked Leone, "What picture have you under that veil?"

Leone started, and replied with some embarrassment, "Oh! — that is only a Madonna."

"A Madonna? Oh, do let me see it!" and she stepped forward with the evident intention of lifting the veil. Leone seized her arm quickly, saying anxiously, "No, no, no! It is not worth it."

But Silvio had followed Edith; and anxious to meet any wish she might express, and feeling that he could take any liberty with Leone, jumped on to the bed, and drew back the veil, saying, "Why not? Let the young lady see it."

Leone, at Silvio's unexpected movement, left Edith, and sprang like a tiger to stop him, crying, "No, no! Do not touch it!" But he was too late. Silvio, thunderstruck, recognized the portrait stolen from his studio. He staggered back with a cry of anguish, "My mother! my mother!" It attracted the attention of Mr. Norman and Valerio, who of course knew the

picture at once. Pietraccio, Maso, the women, and several of the brigands drew near, making quite a picturesque group round the principal characters. Silvio, controlling his emotion, stepped boldly up to Leone, and in an imperious voice demanded, "Antonio, Leone, or whatever your name really is, why did you take that portrait from my studio? What interest had you in it? What interest had you in me?"

To the astonishment of the outlaws, Leone, the terror of the Campania, before whom the most lawless and famous brigands trembled, Leone now not only bore without resentment the authoritative air assumed by Silvio, but actually stood subdued before him. Trembling with emotion, he seized his hand, saying, "Silvio, do not ask me — I knew her — when I was young — and — I loved you for her sake."

The astonishment of the bystanders increased at this assertion, and they drew still nearer with intense curiosity and interest. Silvio was amazed at his answer: he drew his hand slowly away from Leone, gazing at him a while as if in a dream, then almost gasped, "Knew her? Loved me for her sake? — Knew her, you

say?" Then, as if a sudden light had flashed upon his mind, he exclaimed with indescribable anguish, "What! — Is it possible? — Can I be — then — your — your son?" And, as Leone gave no denial to the question, he continued, "Your son! — the son of a brigand — an outlaw!"

Leone, stung by the expression of shame and horror with which Silvio uttered these broken words, seized his hands, and, raising his head in proud defiance, exclaimed, "Of a brigand? No! Leone di Montalba is no brigand: he is king of the Campania and Apulia!"

As if felled by a thunderbolt, Silvio sunk to the earth at these words. Valerio and Leone lifted him up, and laid him on a settee; and the anxious affection and solicitude manifested by the brigand left no doubt in the minds of those around that he was really his father. In a few moments Silvio came to himself; and looking up into the well-known face of Leone, which he had so often painted, he murmured to himself, "Ah! It is true then! The son of a brigand! The son of a brigand!"

Edith could no longer suppress her deep dis-

tress at this startling discovery that crushed all her hopes; and she hid her face in her father's bosom, crying, "His son! Then I have lost him forever!"

The tears sprang involuntarily to Mr. Norman's eyes; though he was a man not easily affected outwardly, however tender-hearted. He stroked her hair lovingly, whispering, "Poor child! Poor child!"

Maso, who stood near Pietraccio, foremost among the spectators of this exciting and unexpected scene, putting his forefinger to his nose with a significant gesture, winked, and whispered, "H'm! His son? Now I understand."

CHAPTER XII.

THE ENGAGEMENT BROKEN.

THE monastery bells were ringing the Angelus on the evening of that eventful day, twilight was fast disappearing before advancing night, the air was balmy, the place as peaceful and quiet as on the evening before: even our four friends, to all outward appearance, seemed to have followed the usual routine; for Father Francesco, having supped with them, had gone to church to attend the evening prayers, Edith and Silvio had gone out to the grove behind the cloister, and Mr. Norman and Valerio were smoking in the dining-room of the Foresteria. Every thing seemed the same; and yet what a change in those twenty-four hours!

After the first shock of the unexpected discovery of his supposed parentage, Silvio's gentle, dutiful nature had resumed its sway: he

sadly took Leone's hand, saying in a low tone, "Since I am your son, I will devote my life to redeem yours; but, for the present, allow us to leave this place." Leone at once gave the necessary orders, then said to Silvio, "I shall be away for four or five days; but I entreat you and your friends to remain at Sonnino, where, on my return, I will see you, and have a long explanation, for there are many things which I must settle now." Maso, who stood near with a large bandanna handkerchief to blindfold Silvio, — for even Leone himself could not allow any outsider to go through the intricate passages approaching the cave with open eyes, — heard this last remark, and, twisting his mouth with a sneer, thought to himself, "H'm! I will find out what sort of a settlement you mean."

Our party, though blindfolded, were treated with the utmost consideration. Leone himself led Silvio first; Clelia and Marcia took charge of Edith, lifting her in their strong arms over any difficult places, and petting her, both by words and actions, as if she were a pretty child; Pietraccio escorted Mr. Norman, and

Maso, Valerio. When they reached the rustic chapel where they had left the boy, they found him sound asleep, and the donkeys quietly munching the bundles of coarse straw that they had brought up in their saddle-bags.

Here they parted; the brigands remaining there until the others were out of sight, that they might not perceive what direction they took in returning to their den.

On reaching the Foresteria, where they arrived late in the afternoon, Mr. Norman summoned Father Francesco, and related to him all the strange events of the day. When they came to the discovery of the stolen picture, and Leone's acknowledgment that he was the father of Silvio, Father Francesco nervously stroked his long white beard, murmuring, "Ah! I had suspected as much! I had suspected as much!"

"Is it he, then, who has furnished the means for my education, and provided so liberally for all my wants?"

"Yes, Silvio: since Leone has acknowledged that he is your father, I see no further reason for keeping it secret. It was Leone who con-

fided you to my care, and has paid all your expenses."

"Oh! why did you not tell me so before?" exclaimed Silvio with an expression of deepest distress.

"My son, I had given my sacred word as a priest when I took charge of you: and breaking that word is more than sin; it is sacrilege. Moreover, I felt that it was better for you not to know it. He consented that I should reveal the name of your mother, which I did; and every thing had been satisfactorily arranged for your happiness. But man proposes, and God disposes. Who could have foreseen that such a revelation should have taken place in so unexpected a manner? Let us, therefore, humbly submit to His will, for what He ordains must be the best. But let us talk no more about it to-night: we are disturbed and excited by the startling events that have occurred. It is now the Ave Maria; and I must go to prayer, to beg our merciful Mother that she will vouchsafe to us all strength to bear with patience and resignation the trials which God has permitted to fall upon the innocent, and wisdom

to decide what is best to be done hereafter. God's blessing be with you all! To-morrow, God willing, we can talk matters over with more calmness and clearer minds."

He left the Foresteria, and walked thoughtfully to the church. The groups of peasants who were hastening to it also, for the evening Angelus, kissed devoutly the beads of his long rosary as they met him. There was an air of such dignity and holiness about him, that our friends watched respectfully, almost religiously, his slow progress towards the church; Mr. Norman saying to himself, "That man is no hypocrite: he is a saint."

Edith and Silvio, moved by a simultaneous impulse, left the room soon after Father Francesco, and went hand in hand, like children, to the seat they had occupied the evening before. They did not speak, they did not even dare to lift their eyes to each other: their hearts were too full for either words or looks. Only the nervous clasp of their hands betrayed to each other their painful emotion.

Long they sat, silently watching the fading light, while the tolling of the Angelus echoed

back from the surrounding hills like a funeral knell. Silvio, recalling the happiness of the previous night, was suddenly overwhelmed by the sharp contrast of their present misery. Gazing mechanically into the darkening sky, he felt as if the last spark of vitality were leaving him; and, with a deep sigh, he sank back against the wall. Edith started up in alarm, and, raising his head on her arm, called, "Silvio, Silvio, speak to me!" Bending over him, her warm tears fell on his face, and partly roused him from his stupor. For a moment the tearful, loving face leaning above him seemed to his excited fancy the Mater Dolorosa of Luini, in her ethereal, faint beauty; but the warm drops that still fell from her eyes quickly recalled him to the sad reality.

"Dearest Edith!" he exclaimed, starting up, "do not weep, or you will drive me mad. Where are we? Ah, I am almost beside myself! O Edith! you see how weak I am,—weaker than a woman. Oh, to think that I am the son of a brigand, a criminal! Oh! why was I ever born?"

The anguish in his voice was almost more

than poor Edith could bear, but the cruel fact could not be ignored. She had been educated to a lofty standard of duty, that no sentiment or passion could outweigh. She summoned all her powers of self-control, and, pressing Silvio's hand, spoke to him calmly, though with suppressed emotion: —

"It is a bitter trial, Silvio: but we must both bear it, — I, for the love and duty I owe to my kind father; you, to yours. I love you as much as I did yesterday, more, even, for the very reason that you are suffering; but you must see, that, under the circumstances, there can be nothing more between us. I consented to be your wife when your parentage was unknown, but now you yourself could not ask nor desire it. You have a noble duty to perform, — that of reclaiming your father from the life he is now leading: devote yourself to him and to art. I shall do the same. We may never be happy ourselves; but we shall have the blessed consciousness of having done our duty, and made the happiness of others."

Silvio listened to her words, so replete with true love, self-sacrifice, and lofty conception of

duty. He bowed his head submissively, as if he had received his final sentence, saying only, —

"You are a pure angel, and teach me how to love aright; you are one of the cherubim, and teach me wisdom; you are a saint, and teach me holiness; and I promise to submit humbly, and obey you as long as I live."

"You are an artist and an Italian, and ever soaring above the clouds. I am not one of the celestial hierarchy, but a plain American girl, with a warm heart and a clear brain. I love you dearly, dearly, as I know you do me; but reason, duty, every thing, oblige us to part. You must agree with me: you know that there is no help for it. Come, let us go back to the house. O Silvio! on an evening like this, on the Pincio, only such a little while ago, you gave me the first kiss of love: here take the last, and God forever bless you!" At this point her heart failed her, and she burst into tears. Silvio, too agitated to speak, pressed her tenderly to his heart, and caressed the dear head with its beautiful bright hair; then, gently raising her hidden face, he imprinted upon her white forehead the last kiss of love.

Mr. Norman and Valerio had remained in the Foresteria, but neither of them seemed much disposed for conversation. Mr. Norman was sitting at a table, absorbed in thought; Valerio, on the balcony, staring at the twilight, while he puzzled himself over his companion's calmness. "If I live to the age of Methuselah," ran his thoughts, "I shall never understand these Americani. Have they really got blood in their veins? How coolly they take every thing! I thought by this time the father would be pacing up and down the room like a caged lion, growling and roaring, cursing Rome, the Pope, the brigands, and every thing in heaven and earth. Instead, just look at him, — quiet as a mouse. He hasn't said a cross word since we left our undesirable company this morning; and now he is sitting there, puffing away at his cigar, as if nothing had happened, and apparently absorbed in admiring the fine cut of his cuffs. And his daughter! — gentle as a kitten, sitting down to supper (though, for that matter, she might as well have staid away; for she didn't eat any thing), calmly smiling at Silvio, and relating to Father

Francesco the minutest details of our romantic adventure, as if she had been a mere indifferent spectator; while an Italian girl, losing the hope of marrying the man she loved, would not have left a hair on her head, and there would have been no end of fits and hysterics, weeping and wailing, and attempts to throw herself over the balcony. She, on the contrary, is as calm as a nun; though I have no doubt she feels awfully. Why in the world didn't she fall in love with me?" At this point, he noticed that Mr. Norman had taken a sheet of paper, and, with a pencil and ruler, was drawing lines, and writing something; still, at intervals, examining his cuffs. His curiosity was so far excited, that he could not resist rising from his chair, and crossing the room, on pretence of getting a light for his cigar. Passing near Mr. Norman, he stopped, and looked at what he was doing. He saw that he was not writing, but drawing very irregular zigzag lines, and over them marking letters and figures, such as, —

W. S. W. 77 — W. 22 — W. ½ N. 105 — N. N. W. 101;

and so on. As he could make neither head

nor tail of that, he returned to his seat, thinking, "What on earth is he doing? Studying algebra, or the cabala? Queer people these Americani, very queer people!"

Mr. Norman continued some time longer studying his algebraic or cabalistic signs; while Valerio, puffing away at his cigar, watched him with wonder. Finally, he seemed to have reached some conclusion satisfactory to himself; for, carefully folding the paper upon which he had been marking, and putting it into his pocket-book, he came out upon the balcony, and, walking up to Valerio, said with a triumphant air, —

"I hold those brigands in the hollow of my hand."

Valerio was really startled; thinking that the man had lost his wits, and, with an uncomfortable fear that he might attempt something perilous, said, —

"What do you mean, Mr. Norman?"

"I mean what I say. I have every one of those brigands in my power. It depends on me to have every single one of them arrested and hung."

"The man is surely demented," thought Valerio, who had that almost superstitious awe of the omnipotence of brigandage common to Southern Italians; but he could not resist asking, "How are you going to do it? Have you calculated the risk?"

"How am I going to do it? That I will not tell you just now. And, as to the risk, I am willing to risk my life to rid society of such a nest of ruffians."

"But then, you must remember that their chief is Silvio's father, and that he certainly treated us most generously, setting us free without ransom."

"Ah! you have me there, I confess. I had rather they had extorted twenty thousand dollars from me than have been set free by the discovery that has blasted my poor Edith's happiness." Mr. Norman's tone and expression, at first defiant and indignant against the criminals whose power he seemed to despise, here changed suddenly to such a depth of feeling and distress, as quite upset all Valerio's theory of the stoical placidity of the Americani. "Bless me! if he goes on like that, I can't

stand it! I shall be blubbering like a school-boy in a minute." And, to change the subject, he asked, —

"What do you mean to do?"

"Mean to do? That is easily settled. This marriage, of course, cannot take place. I have not said any thing to Edith; but I know her too well to need to suggest what it becomes her to do under the circumstances. She has gone out with Silvio on purpose; and I am sure, that, by this time, every thing is arranged. It will break her heart, but I know she will do it." For a moment his voice betrayed his distress again; and Valerio almost cried out, "Oh, don't! don't!" but he quickly recovered himself, and continued, "She is a sensible girl, though, and very conscientious. She will not give way to it. I must take her away from Rome, — from Italy. We shall probably travel in Germany and France, and settle down wherever she prefers, — perhaps in Dresden or Paris, — where she can continue her studies. But hush! Here they come."

Mr. Norman had heard their steps in the next room; but Silvio took his leave there, and

Edith, entering alone, did not notice Valerio in the balcony, but, rushing into her father's arms, cried out with deep emotion, "It is all over, papa, all over! Our engagement is broken!" and she clung to him, sobbing convulsively.

Valerio, this time, could stand it no longer. Dashing his half-finished cigar into the street, he stole across the room on tiptoe, unobserved by the two, who were too deeply agitated to notice him, and, when outside, pulled out his handkerchief, nervously rolling it up into a ball, with which he struck rather than wiped his eyes, exclaiming almost aloud, "Why on earth did not that girl fall in love with me?" and rushed out into the open square, to study the effect of the campanile of the old convent against the clear, starlit sky.

The next morning, after an early breakfast, the travelling carriage that had brought them to Sonnino drove up to the door to take them back to Rome, as Mr. Norman had wisely concluded, that, since the engagement was broken off, it was better for them to separate as quickly as possible. Valerio was to escort them to

Rome; but Silvio would remain at Sonnino with Father Francesco, as his father had requested. He remembered what Leone had said about his friends also waiting until his return, but he did not urge it. What further intercourse could there be between them and his father? Moreover, he himself felt, that, since they must part, the sooner it was over, the better. Mr. Norman, before leaving, had made a farewell call on Father Francesco in his cell. The good father was reading his breviary; but, on Mr. Norman's entrance, he closed the book, and gave his guest a seat, saying, —

"I am very sorry, my dear Mr. Norman, that you should have taken the trouble to come up to my poor cell: I had intended to go to you, to consult as to what was best to do, as soon as I had finished my morning religious duties."

"Well, I thought, on the whole, that there was nothing more to be said about it. The young people themselves have taken the proper course, and have voluntarily broken off the engagement. Therefore I decided that it was best to depart at once, and came up only to take leave of you."

"Yes: Silvio was with me all last night, and informed me of their resolution. I approved, of course, for, under the circumstances, there was nothing else to be done; but still, I had wished that we might have had some further explanation with Leone before you left. There is something unsatisfactory about him still, which might have been cleared up; and who knows but that some further disclosures might have brought us to a different conclusion, and restored the happiness of our young people? I dread the effect of this severe blow on my poor Silvio, who is of such a sensitive and affectionate nature: it will utterly destroy all his hopes, his ambition, his very life, I fear. And you also must feel the same in regard to your lovely daughter. I have been thinking over this matter all night, and I still have some lingering doubt as to Leone's relationship to Silvio."

"What! What doubt can you possibly feel? His own statement, and the life-long interest he has shown for the lad, fully attest it. What but a father's love could have made a criminal like him act as he has done towards Silvio?"

"Ah! Mr. Norman, you know little of the mysteries of the human heart, or the passionate Italian temperament. Leone may be unfortunate, rather than the criminal you consider him."

Mr. Norman was greatly surprised at this attempt to palliate Leone's notorious guilt by so reverend a man as Father Francesco, even while he expressed doubt of his asserted relationship to Silvio. His former suspicions recurred to him; and again he thought to himself, "Is this man really a hypocrite, or a saint?" But, in any case, he felt still more anxious to get away. The idea that he, and even worse, his daughter, should have any thing more to do with one so closely connected with either a saint or a sinner, either an unfortunate man or an assassin and outlaw, so outweighed every other consideration, that he fully decided to leave, not only Sonnino, but Italy, as soon as possible. Thus resolved, he answered, —

"Father Francesco, whatever interest you or Leone may have in Silvio, my daughter, with my entire approval, has fully decided on the

only and right course to take: therefore we had better depart at once. We leave Sonnino to-day, and in a short time we shall be far away from Italy. I shall never forget, however, how kind and good and hospitable you have been to us; and if ever, in any way, I can be of service to you, believe me, it will give me the greatest pleasure."

He took the hand of the good monk, who seemed very much distressed at this resolution, saying sadly, —

"Poor Silvio! Poor Silvio! Well, well! The will of the Lord be done. His blessing be with you all!" He laid on the table the breviary, which he had been holding, adding, "I will finish my morning lesson later, and go with you to the Foresteria to take leave of your estimable daughter"

An hour later the carriage containing Mr. Norman, Edith, and Valerio was descending at a quick trot the zigzag road down through the Alpine village of Sonnino; and when they passed under the ancient wall of the Capuchin Convent, by a common impulse they looked up, and there, leaning over the parapet, under

the trees of the esplanade where Edith and Silvio had sat the two previous evenings, stood Father Francesco leaning on Silvio's shoulder. The movement of his long white beard, slightly agitated by the morning breeze, looked as if his lips were moving in prayer for them, while he waved his handkerchief. Was it a last farewell, or a blessing?

As the carriage turned the corner, and they were lost to sight, Edith buried her face in the handkerchief which she had waved in response, her father asking himself with real anxiety, "Is he saint, or hypocrite?" whilst Valerio, who, whether intentionally or not, had taken a seat beside the driver, never turned his head, but puffed away at his cigar as if his life depended upon its speedy consumption.

CHAPTER XIII.

LEONE'S AMBITION.

SILVIO had now been several days at Sonnino, without seeing or hearing any thing from Leone. He lived in a cell of the convent, more like a monk than an artist. With the exception of Father Francesco, he hardly saw or spoke to any one. He had attempted once or twice to paint, but could accomplish nothing; his mind seemed an absolute blank: and he entertained serious thoughts of joining the brotherhood, and burying himself in a convent. He thought to himself, "When time and the peaceful monastic life shall have calmed my earthly passions, I will return to my art, and, like Beato Angelico, portray the angelic ethereal forms that I see in my ascetic visions." But, whenever he expressed the slightest hint of a desire to enter the convent, Father Francesco would reply, "No, my son: you never

had any vocation for it, nor have you now. Your disappointment and despondency make you feel a craving for rest and seclusion: these you can have without taking monastic vows. Such resolutions should not be made hastily and rashly: they would only bring remorse and suffering. Besides, you have another mission, a duty nobler than the retreat from the battle of life, and that is, to win your father from his evil life. I have tried hard for these many years, but unsuccessfully: God may have left it for your filial love to accomplish. If you succeed, the satisfaction you will experience will go far to repay you for your sad loss."

Thus, from time time, the good monk would try to console, cheer, and rouse Silvio, who, in return, would vow to himself to lay aside every other thought, and devote himself to the reformation of his father.

One evening, while he was sitting in his guardian's cell, listening to his wise advice, a knock was heard at the door; and, when Father Francesco said "Come in," Leone lifted the latch, and appeared on the threshold. He was dressed, as usual, in his hunting costume of

gray velvet, which looked black in the darkness of the corridor. The oil-lamp on the monk's table threw its faint red light on his sunburnt face, giving it a fierce, lion-like look sufficiently terrifying. But, at the sight of Silvio with Father Francesco, his stern features relaxed, a smile of love irradiated them as with a gleam of sunshine, and he sprang with open arms to kiss and embrace him, crying, "O Silvio, my son, my son!" with such intense fervor, that it almost overpowered the dejected youth.

Father Francesco stood watching them with emotion and delight; thinking, "Strange man! strange man! What a powerfully impulsive nature, — as strong in love as in hatred; but through this love, by God's mercy, we may work out his salvation." Approaching them, he laid his hand gently on Leone's shoulder, saying, "Welcome, Leone, into this holy place: may its peace be a balm to your restless spirit! For the first time you meet your son to be recognized by him as his father, but I am still his guardian. Remember our agreement when you brought him to me, that you renounced all right and claim over him, and promised never to

reveal your relationship to him. You have broken the promise; but I have power to hold you to your agreement, if I consider it for his interest, and as long as you lead your present life" —

Leone turned a glance of quick reproach upon him, interrupting, "Father Francesco, not a word of this before my Silvio, please. I shall certainly never claim what I have renounced, nor do I wish to; for I feel deeply and gratefully how faithful you have been to him. As to my not keeping my promise, you forget that it was pure accident that revealed it. But since fate willed it so, and you know how dearly I love him, will you not now let him love me?" He turned, and clasped Silvio to his heart, as if he wished to expend in an hour all the love he had held repressed within his bosom for so many years. Silvio, actually bewildered by this vehement expression of affection from a man whom he hardly knew whether to love or fear, stood silent and confused.

"God forbid that I should put any obstacle in your way, or prevent you from showing your affection for your son; and, as this is your first

meeting, I think the presence of a third person must be irksome. Silvio, take your father into your own cell; but before you go away, Leone, come back and see me."

Leone did not wait for Silvio to go first: but putting his arm round him, like a loving girl, he gently drew him into his cell, and closed the door; then, taking the youth's head between his hands, he looked at him intently, exclaiming, —

"How handsome you are! The perfect image of your mother!"

The word "mother" roused Silvio from his bewilderment: he almost forced Leone into a seat, and, drawing a chair for himself beside him, said anxiously, —

"Do tell me about her! do tell me! Who was she? When did she die?"

These questions seemed to disturb Leone. A violent shudder ran through him: he grasped Silvio's hand tightly, saying slowly and with effort, "Your poor mother? my Silvia! Ah! she died only a few days after your birth. She was a saint, a martyr! Do not speak of her. I cannot bear it: it unmans me." There was

almost a suspicion of tears in his eyes; and his bold, lion-like countenance saddened into the expression which Silvio had transferred to the canvas when Leone had sat to him as the model of St. Jerome.

"Poor mother! Poor mother! I cannot resist speaking of her. It is the first time in my life that I have had any opportunity of asking about her. Until now my only knowledge of her has been the little miniature which was round my neck, and from which I painted the portrait you took away, and which caused the discovery."

"I could not help it, Silvio. You painted her as she was when living. I saw my Silvia, and could not resist the temptation to possess it. I knew you could paint another."

While they were speaking of it, Silvio had involuntarily put his hand in his breast, and almost unconsciously taken out the locket containing the miniature. Leone perceived it; and, taking it eagerly from his hand, unclasped it, and, raising it to his lips, kissed it devoutly, saying, "It is she, my saint, my angel! She gave this to me when we were engaged, and I had it set in this locket."

As he closed the case, the ducal coronet on the outside caught his eye. Instantly the tenderness faded from his face: he was again the fierce, savage brigand. His eyes blazed; and, almost crushing the locket in his grasp, he cried, —

"That is not the case it was in!" But, noticing Silvio's astonishment at this unexpected change, he controlled himself, and in a milder tone resumed, —

"Forgive me, Silvio; but the sight of that locket brought back bitter memories. Take back your miniature: keep it sacredly, for it is the face of a blessed saint." He handed it back to Silvio; then with a shake of his head, as if to drive away painful thoughts, he added, "Let us talk of something else, — of yourself, of your future prospects. Where are your friends the Americans, especially that lovely girl?"

At the mention of Edith, Silvio grew pale, and, sinking back in his chair, replied in a tone of bereavement, "Gone, gone away from Italy, never to return."

"What! Gone away! Did I not tell you to keep them till my return?"

"Father," — and, in addressing him by this name, Silvio felt a pang of distress which he could hardly conceal, — "what was the use of detaining them? We had been engaged, but mutually agreed to break it off, the moment we discovered that I was the son of" — He stopped, unwilling to say more in his father's presence; but Leone took up his sentence boldly.

"Son of a brigand? Say it: it does not offend me. I am a brigand, and am proud of it. There was a time when I might have thought as you do; but now, after so many years of experience, I have come to the conclusion that the world belongs to those who know how to rule it. What was Napoleon but a Corsican brigand on a larger scale? I reign over the Roman Campania and the Apulia. If I succeed in extending my sway over the Neapolitan States, who knows but that I might overthrow that puny king, and proclaim myself in his place? Who was Masaniello? Who was Cola di Rienzi? Who defeated the French Republican army under Championnet, but Cardinal Ruffo at the head of the brigands of the Campania and the Neapolitan States? Do you sup-

pose that my only ambition is to levy blackmail upon a few country proprietors, and to carry off what government money I can lay my hands on? Do you think that I command only those few men whom you saw at Castellaccio? I have hundreds under my orders in the Campania and the Apulia, and am gradually extending my sway over the disaffected in the other provinces of Naples. Wait till my plans are matured, and you may live to see your father, whom they call a brigand, leading an army that will destroy these miserable, corrupt governments of Southern Italy."

Leone had risen from his seat in the excitement of his dreams of glory, and he stood before Silvio the embodiment of a mediæval soldier of fortune. He could not resist the thought of what a superb model he would make at that moment for a Guido da Romena or a Ghino da Tacco. But these instinctive thoughts of the artist vanished before his consciousness of the terrible reality. He replied with some hesitation, "Father, I will not discuss this subject with you; but, when I consider the criminals who compose your bands, I

cannot realize that you expect to carry out such high aspirations with such wicked tools."

"The wise man uses any tool that will accomplish his end: when that is done, he destroys such as become useless or dangerous." Just as he uttered the words, a slight noise was heard outside the window, as if some one or some thing touched the blinds. Leone, with the quickness habitual with such men, sprang instantly, and threw it open, exclaiming, "Can any one be listening!" and looked out suspiciously, with his hand on his stiletto. The window looked upon an open terrace filled with large flowering shrubs, orange and mandarin trees in half-barrels. The night was very dark, and these trees and flowers threw the terrace into deep shadow. Had it been moonlight, Leone might have perceived two men stretched out full length close behind the nearest shrubs, holding their breath, so as not to be discovered.

Silvio, not supposing that any one, especially the monks, the sole occupants of the convent, could have any interest or curiosity to hear their conversation, re-assured him.

"There is no fear of that, dear father: the

monks are mostly in bed, and that terrace is sixteen feet above the ground. It must have been some bat or other night-bird that flew against the blinds, attracted by the light within."

Leone closed the blinds carefully, and returned to his chair. The two men, as soon as the blinds were closed, stealthily arose, and with noiseless steps approached the window. It was only a man's height above the terrace; and, placing their fingers on their lips in token of silence, they stood listening again, as they had been before. These two men were Pietraccio and Maso, who had been left in the esplanade below to await Leone's orders; but they had climbed the walls of the convent, and now stood on the terrace under the window of Silvio's cell, playing the spy upon their leader.

Leone resumed the conversation. "Those men whom you saw, and the several bands with their leaders in the Campania and Apulia, all under my orders, are merely my visible tools; but the secret ones I count by the thousand. Do you suppose I could go about so freely, and

enter Rome so openly, if it were not the interest of hundreds to protect me? I pension more people than the Papal Government. I am a leader in the secret societies. I was a Carbonaro, and condemned to the galleys for it, like Pellico and Maroncelli, and the best patriots of Italy. What have I not suffered and lost? My liberty — my property confiscated — my"— Here he suddenly stopped, put his hand to his head, then brushing back his hair, as if to dispel painful recollections, he added, "Ah! you can never know, never conceive, how much I have suffered. But I have never ranged myself against society, only against those who wronged me, and the government which despoiled me. And now a movement is at hand, and I am among its leaders. In one week I can raise five thousand armed men who will follow me to the death: so can the others; and, when we have annihilated these wretched governments, you will no longer be ashamed of your father." His voice deepened impressively as he said these last words; but Silvio, far from feeling the sanguine exultation of Leone, replied sadly, —

"You may be successful, father; but that will not bring back to me the woman I have lost."

"Lost!" cried Leone haughtily. "Lost! Why?"

"I told you. We have broken our engagement, and she and her father are leaving Italy not to return."

Leone looked thoughtful at this, and, turning from the exciting subject of his own plans, said, —

"Not to return? H'm! Have they left Italy yet?"

"Valerio wrote to me that they were on the eve of departure."

"I am sorry that you did not try to keep them here. I might have persuaded the father: for the young lady loves you; and, when women love, they do not regard such matters as their parents do. I have deposited half a million francs in the French Rentes in your name, and I thought that might have mollified him. I will go to Rome at once, and see him."

"Father, do not, for God's sake!" implored Silvio, distracted at the idea. "Edith was not

influenced by her father: she decided for herself, and I approved her decision. Moreover, though I can not and will not repudiate my relationship to you, — for I feel that I owe you my life and all that I am, — your money I can and will refuse. Never again will I touch a penny of it."

"Why not? Because it is stolen, as the vulgar would call it? Did not the government steal mine, and call it *confiscation?* I have only retaliated; and what I give you is only what would have belonged to you by natural right, if I had not been wronged and betrayed and despoiled of my own."

"Father, I have fully resolved to do nothing further in this matter. I love Edith too well to make her my wife under the existing circumstances."

"Hush, hush, boy!" expostulated Leone. "Do not speak so. You love her, and she loves you: you are just suited to each other, and you shall be united. Do you suppose I have not my dreams of happiness? When I have accomplished my aim, and abandoned this life, — which I did not choose, but was forced

into by the treachery of others, — do you not think that I want to have some one to love me, and cheer my old age? And who but my son? My dream is to see him rich, happy, and good; to see him in a pleasant home on the coast of Sorrento or Amalfi, and to dance on my knees the children of him whom I have loved so much, and for whom there is no sacrifice I would not make. The time will come — indeed, it is close at hand — when I can wash away the stain that now darkens my name by regenerating our country; and then you will not be ashamed of your father."

Leone's voice quivered as he spoke. There was something so touching in his expression, that Silvio stood spell-bound, amazed at such a confession of tender feeling from this formidable man. He thought it an opportune moment, while he was in this softened mood, to introduce the subject of his earnest wish, and said in an entreating tone, —

"You mean, then, to abandon your present life?"

"Yes, when the time comes, and my aim is accomplished." Again a slight noise on the

blinds, as before, but not so loud, caught his ear. He glanced toward the window, but paid no further attention to it, and went on speaking. "I will leave you now; for it is already late, and I must go to Rome. To-morrow I will see Mr. Norman; and he must consent to this marriage, or, at least, defer his departure until I have matured my plans" —

"Father!" pleaded Silvio. "Do not, I entreat. This marriage is impossible now. Abandon the life you lead: that is my only desire."

"No: you love Edith. She was betrothed to you: she shall be your wife. I promise you that, and I have never promised in vain. Leave it to me. I have accomplished more difficult matters than that. Leave it to me, and you shall be happy."

Accustomed to command, Leone spoke so decidedly, that Silvio, naturally gentle and yielding, dared not insist: in fact, he saw that any attempt to dissuade him would be useless. They returned to Father Francesco's cell. The venerable monk also tried to persuade him to abandon his plan, but in vain. Leone left the

convent hastily, as if to escape their entreaties, and be off at once upon his undertaking, repeating to Silvio, while tenderly embracing him, his parting promise, "She shall be your wife."

When Leone and Silvio left the room to go to Father Francesco's cell, Pietraccio and Maso, who had stood under the window listening to their conversation, made a sign to each other to quit the place, knowing that their chief would soon leave the convent. They crept stealthily to the end of the terrace, over which hung the branches of a superb elm-tree that rose from the esplanade below, and noiselessly let themselves down by it, and returned to the square in front of the convent, where Leone would expect to find them waiting.

"Now, what do you think of that?" began Maso with his habitual sneer. "Was I not right when I said that our chief meant to be tray us? You heard him say yourself, if your ears were long enough, that he meant to abandon the life of a brigand."

"Abandon the life does not mean to betray us. He spoke of some plan that he has for upsetting this government. If that is successful, we need no longer fear the gallows, but may all return to a peaceful life."

"Pooh! Nonsense! Do you suppose he is able to accomplish that? I say he means to betray us, and retire with the money he has accumulated."

"Maso!" interrupted Pietraccio angrily. Like a faithful mastiff, having followed his leader for so many years, he was unwilling to suspect him of treachery. "I tell you, I will not suspect our captain, until I have positive proofs of treachery; then I shall know how to act;" and he touched his stiletto significantly. "Till then, I will be faithful to him. Did he not divide our last capture equally, when, by betraying us, he could have kept the whole? Did you not get your three thousand *scudi*, like the rest? Didn't I give mine to my old father, to pay off the mortgage on his farm? Don't you suppose that I would like to go back there, and live quietly, with Clelia, if this government was overturned, and a general amnesty for past

crimes given, as it was after the revolution of '48? I will not hear another word about it. Hush! Here he comes."

He went up to meet Leone, whom he saw coming out of the convent; and they stood for some time speaking, Leone giving some special orders in a low tone, which Maso, who stood at a respectful distance, could not hear. He ruminated moodily, "What a confounded ass that Pietraccio is! Here he has a good chance to become chief of the band, and he will not use it. I thought I had convinced him, and that he was all ready to give the captain four inches of stiletto under his ribs; and there would have been an end of it. He would have become chief; and I would have led him by the nose, like a tame bull. But it is of no use: he has no ambition. The highest place he will ever get will be the gallows. So much the worse for him. I would try it on my own account, but the other fellows will not trust me. They are willing enough to win my money, when I can't cheat them, but as to electing me their chief — Bah! They fear I know law enough to get them all hanged, and save my own skin.

Uff! Bad luck to them all! What a good time I should have if I were the chief!" At this thought, his face assumed a Mephistophelian expression, repulsive to look at.

He was interrupted by Leone, who called him, and ordered him to get two horses at once, from their usual hostelry, and start with him for Rome. He obeyed, grumbling, "A sleepless night again, I see; and with no good object either, for we never get any money in Rome. Who are we going to capture there? The Pope?"

A short time after, Leone, followed by Maso, left Sonnino on horseback, taking the winding road by the convent. As they passed it, Leone looked up, and saw a light in the window he knew to be Silvio's. He kissed his hand towards it, and spurred his horse at a fast trot towards Rome.

Pietraccio, having received his orders, turned back to the mountain. Agile as a goatherd, in an hour he was in the cave of the Castellaccio. He roused up the inmates, and taking two of the women, Marcia and Clelia, they started on some unknown expedition. They were so fa-

miliar with the different mountain paths, that they descended as easily as in daylight; and before midnight they were on the Campania, going towards Rome. Avoiding the public roads, they went along the cattle-paths, till they reached a farmhouse, or, rather, a cattle-ranch, some fifteen miles from the city. Here they were received as old friends; and the men were distributed among the numerous hay-lofts, to rest and sleep, while the two women, escorted by a couple of the band, mounted horses, carrying fodder, and started for Rome, reaching the outskirts about dawn, when they put up at one of the innumerable hostelries for country people and their horses, where we will leave them for the present.

CHAPTER XIV.

PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE.

IT was one of those beautiful fall days that seem like a continuation of summer. A slight mist, rising from the Tiber, hung over the city, but was gradually absorbed by the rising sun, whose rays — reflected, first, by the lofty dome of St. Peter's, which it illuminated till it seemed like a rival sun, and then by the many windows lower down — were like so many glittering lances, piercing and scattering the vapor. The early risers were bestirring themselves about the streets, opening shops and *cafés*, sweeping sidewalks, and preparing for the labors of the day. The church-bells rang out merrily the morning Angelus, as if rejoicing at the new morn, though few answered the call; for, with the exception of the officiating priest and an acolyte or two, the churches were absolutely empty. Even the sextons,

chilled by sweeping the marble pavements, stood on the outer steps, broom in hand, gossiping with the beggars, and enjoying the warmth of the sun of Italy.

Mr. Norman had risen early: it was the last day they were to spend in Rome. He had many things to attend to, — accounts to settle, trunks to have packed, packages and boxes to be shipped, and various matters incidental to the breaking-up of a three-years' residence in the city. Much had been done in the few days since their return from the eventful trip to Sonnino; but still, many little details were necessarily left for the last day. Edith had not yet made her appearance; and Mr. Norman, anxious not to disturb the rest she so much needed, refrained from bustling about, collecting the many little articles that were to be taken with them, and sat down quietly to read the last "Galignani," which had just arrived.

He had glanced over one or two articles, when his eyes were attracted by the heading, "Our Roman Correspondence. A most bold and successful robbery committed against the Papal Government by a band of brigands, head-

ed by the famous chief, Leone!" He hurriedly read the details, as follows: "On the 13th instant" ("Why, that was just three days after we were at Sonnino, in his power!") "a detail of mounted *gens-d'armes*, some thirty-five strong, commanded by an officer, were escorting a government-wagon, carrying several iron chests containing two hundred thousand dollars, destined for the Papal Treasury, proceeds of the taxes from the province of Ravenna. They were waylaid in the Apennine passes by an overwhelming force of brigands; and after a sharp encounter, in which several soldiers were killed and wounded, and the rest put to flight, the chests were broken open, and the treasure abstracted. By the accounts, the brigands must have numbered over fifty, and were led by Leone in person. The Papal Government has set a large price on the head of Leone, and a smaller one on that of any member of his band."

"Bless me!" exclaimed Mr. Norman. "To think that only eight days ago we were in the power of that man, and poor Edith engaged to his son! I see now why he did not care for

any ransom from us. What could he have got out of me? Ten to twenty thousand dollars at the most. He goes for higher stakes. Two hundred thousand dollars! That is a pretty good haul. Why didn't I hear of this bold robbery before? I have read the Roman papers, and there was no word of it. It is just like them. The censor of the press would not like to circulate news which redounds so to the disgrace of the government. It does not sound very well, that brigands could waylay a government transport, escorted by mounted troops, and put them to flight: so they suppress it in the local papers, and we get the information only from outside." He heard Edith's step approaching; so he hastily tore the paper to pieces, and threw it into the waste-basket, thinking, "It is better that she should not hear of this. Poor girl! How much she has suffered!"

Edith came into the room, and ran to give her father her morning kiss, which he tenderly returned. These two people, who had through life treated each other rather with the friendly familiarity of affectionate comrades, repressing

all show of sentiment as an affectation unworthy of sensible people, had now, after the sad experience of the past month, felt a new bond of sympathy hitherto unawakened. Mr. Norman's whole manner was altered. He had no heart for the banter in which he formerly delighted, but watched over Edith with the tenderness of a lover, to soothe her, and gratify her lightest wish, with a sweet, gentle grace of which no one would have thought him capable. A change had also come over Edith; though she used her utmost efforts not to let it appear, but tried to seem as bright and light-hearted as before. She had lost much of her interest in painting, but persisted in working even more than usual, so as to occupy her mind. Valerio had come every day; and she painted under his direction, never alluding to what had passed, except once, when she asked if Silvio was well, and Valerio replied that he was. Valerio had assisted them, also, in their preparations for leaving Rome, often saying to himself, "What a pity! What a pity! I have lost my brightest and best pupil. Why on earth could she not have fallen in love with me?"

Edith had quietly gone through with her packing, expressing no regrets or hesitation, at leaving Italy, in the presence of her father; still her heart ached within her: for she loved Rome with the love of an artist, and she loved Silvio; and to depart, and sever all connection with these, the happiest associations of her life both as artist and woman, was more than she could have borne without the tender, sustaining love of her father, who watched and adapted himself to her moods with the insight born of his devoted parental affection.

It had been arranged that she should go out to the Pincio that morning with Valerio for the last time, at an hour when very few would be there, in order to give the finishing touches to her sketch, while Mr. Norman would remain at home to make the final arrangements for their departure. Accordingly, soon after breakfast, Valerio appeared; and, followed by the maid, who carried her painting apparatus, they set out for the Pincio.

Mr. Norman remained alone. He went out on to the balcony, and watched Edith, walking quickly but silently beside Valerio, until they

turned the corner, repeating sadly to himself, "Poor child! How bravely she bears it! Poor child!" Returning to the room, he called the servants, who were almost in tears at the thought of losing such a good master, and began directing and helping the packing. Clearing out the drawers of the writing-table in his sitting-room, he came across a mahogany case containing a superb, silver-mounted Colt's revolver. He took it out, and, noticing that it was loaded, he thought, "Ah! if I had only had this with me, the scoundrels would not have got us so easily. But then, what would have been the consequence? I might have killed two or three; but what would have become of Edith if I had resisted? After all, perhaps it was for the best." He stood musing, looking at it, and thinking what a change from the clumsy fire-arm of fifty years back, with its long, black barrel, wide muzzle, ramrod, huge flint lock, and brass-bound stock, was this dainty toy in its velvet case, silver-mounted, polished, and sparkling like a jewel.

While thus absorbed, a servant entered, saying that a gentleman wished to speak to him.

Mr. Norman, supposing that it was some one connected with the packing and forwarding of his effects, turned, and saw in the doorway the bold, manly figure of Leone.

Amazed at the sight, and at the daring of the man upon whose head a price had just been set, he involuntarily rested his hand on the revolver, though without the least idea of using it. Leone, observing the action, quickly though quietly put his hand in his breast, saying, "Mr. Norman, do you receive me as an enemy? Beware! Before you can raise that pistol, you are a dead man."

"Leone," replied Mr. Norman, removing his hand, "I had no such intention, I assure you. It was only by accident that the case was here. But I must say, I am very much surprised to see you in Rome. I do not see how you dare run such a risk. Nor do I understand what further business you can have with me."

"Hush! hush!" whispered Leone, looking cautiously round, that no servant might hear their conversation. Then, without asking permission, he carefully closed the door, and, walking up to Mr. Norman, extended his hand in

friendly greeting, saying, "Mr. Norman, I have come to Rome on purpose to have a conversation with you on a matter which concerns the happiness of two young people whom we dearly love. I have been waiting in the *café* opposite for an opportunity to meet you alone. I saw your daughter and Valerio going out, and decided to come and see you here. Now, please to sit down, and I will explain the object of my visit."

In his long life as leader of outlaws, whom he had to subdue into obedience by both moral and physical force, Leone had acquired an absolute air of command that he could not lay wholly aside, even when his intentions were most friendly. Mr. Norman felt somewhat ruffled by his imperious manner; but at the same time there was something so irresistibly manly in the outlaw's bearing, that, in spite of his inward repugnance, he could not but shake hands, and sit down to listen to what he had to say.

"Mr. Norman, I understand, that, on the unexpected discovery of the relationship between Silvio and myself, you broke off your

daughter's engagement, and are on the point of leaving Rome."

"That is so: only I did not break it off; it was my daughter herself, of her own free will."

"Oh, yes! we understand that," said Leone quickly with a slight smile. "The daughter breaks the engagement, but by the father's peremptory orders."

"No, Leone: you are mistaken. That may be the case in Italy, but not with us. My daughter did break off her engagement with Silvio by her own free act, though with my full approval."

"Very well; we will not argue about that: but this engagement must not be broken. Silvio loves your daughter; and, from what I hear, she fully reciprocates his love. Why should these two people be unhappy?"

Mr. Norman stared in astonishment at his formidable interlocutor, and felt indignant at his supreme impertinence and total moral unconsciousness. That the man whose criminal life was the cause of all this misery should ask him calmly why these young people should be unhappy, was more than he could stand.

He had resolved to treat him civilly while in his house; but at this question he could not resist replying, —

"You seem to forget who you are, and that you alone are responsible for it." He had hardly uttered the words before he regretted them, wishing that he had not alluded so directly to Leone's criminal life; but much to his surprise, instead of the explosion which he half expected, Leone took it very quietly, and, with a saddened expression clouding his face, replied, —

"You are right: I do forget; or, rather, I see it in a very different light from you. However, we will say no more about that. If I am the only obstacle in the way, it is easily removed. Nobody knows of my relationship to Silvio except a few who have no interest in revealing it. I have no legal claims over him, for I renounced them in favor of Father Francesco. Let Silvio marry your daughter, as first arranged, by the name of Di Montalba, granted to him by the Pope's dispensation. Leave Rome, if you think best, and live in Naples, or even out of Italy. I promise never to interfere or come near you,

or at least until I have so redeemed my name, that you will no longer be ashamed of me. I shall be satisfied, if Silvio is happy. And he is not a beggar," he added, as if he were bringing forward his strongest argument; "for besides his profession, in which he is eminent, I have deposited a million francs in his name, in the French Government bonds, where no one can disturb them."

Mr. Norman had listened with interest to Leone's appeal for his son's happiness; and a relenting of pity towards the man was slowly rising in his benevolent heart, at the sight of such a notorious criminal actually pleading for sympathy. But when he mentioned the money which he had secured to Silvio, and that money the proceeds of robberies, one of which he had committed within that very week, all his honest, manly nature asserted itself, and he indignantly exclaimed, —

"No, sir! Neither my daughter nor I will ever consent to a marriage with the son of a man who actually boasts of the money he has settled on him, knowing where that money came from. No! Let us end this conversation,

which cannot result in any thing good. I have just been reading, this very morning, where some of this money" —

Mr. Norman hesitated, unwilling, under any provocation, to insult a man in his own house, and hastily fumbled in the waste-basket for the torn pieces of the "Galignani."

"Don't trouble yourself," replied Leone, without manifesting the slightest anger. "I suppose you read of my exploit of last week. That was a very good enterprise, and very skilfully carried out. They have reported that I had an overwhelming force, and that the troops opposed an heroic resistance; that, after the loss of seven or eight of their number, they were obliged to abandon the treasure, or they would all have been massacred. I suppose it reads very well in the newspaper, doesn't it? Ha! ha!" he continued with a most contemptuous laugh. "Resistance! Overwhelming numbers! Killed and wounded! Judge! I had but twenty-five men with me. There was a great deal of shooting, and balls hissed about pretty briskly, and several men fell; but no one will ever find their bodies, for by this time

they are on their way abroad, possibly to your country, with their pockets lined with a few thousand dollars, and released from this contemptible Papal service. Bah! You know very little about this country: how should you? And as to my settling large amounts on Silvio, why should I not? Did they not treacherously accuse me of conspiring against the government? Was I not condemned to the galleys as a Carbonaro? Did they not confiscate my property? What I have settled on Silvio is no more than he would by rights have inherited, had they not robbed me of it. You, I have no doubt, call me brigand, outlaw, robber. I call myself an avenger. I simply retaliate. The government adopts the *lex talionis* with me. I pay them in their own coin, — an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

Mr. Norman listened to the man in utter amazement. What he stated, if true, seemed to him almost a revelation. Nevertheless he felt how obtuse must be the moral sense which satisfied itself with such reasoning, and more than ever he wished to get away from a country breathing such a perverted moral atmos-

phere. At the same time, he could not but confess to himself that he felt far less repugnance to the man than ever before.

"Leone," he began, "what you say may be true (to the shame of this miserable government be it said); but it does not alter my determination. To-morrrow I leave Rome, and in a week we shall be out of Italy. I have no ill feeling towards you, and wish you no harm. I regret only that circumstances should have brought us into contact. I regret it more for Silvio and my daughter; but my decision is irrevocable. Now let us end this conversation: she will soon be here, and I do not think it well that she should meet you. Your presence might distress her, and she has already suffered enough."

"I am exceedingly sorry for her, and would have given the world if this discovery had not happened: but it was not my doing; it was an unfortunate accident. Let me make one more proposal to you. Do not leave Italy. Wait a few months longer, a year perhaps; and by that time events may occur in which I shall take such a part, that you and your daughter

may reconsider your resolution. Do not act hastily, for you may repent of it."

"Leone, our minds are fully made up. We cannot repent doing what is right. Let us end this." He rose from his chair, as if dismissing Leone peremptorily. Leone also rose, his forehead contracting as if with the effort to stifle fierce thoughts that worked in his mind, his passionate nature resuming its wonted impetuosity. He spoke with repressed anger, —

"Mr. Norman, you seem to forget to whom you are speaking. I have tried persuasion, but I can use other means. Beware!" His eyes flashed with a threatening gleam: but it exasperated, rather than subdued, Mr. Norman, whose upright nature revolted at such a tone assumed by a criminal; and he answered with spirit, —

"Leone, it is you who seem to forget where you are, and that a word from me would deliver you into the hands of justice, or of those who would be glad to earn the large price set on your head, and end your criminal career. I would do it as a duty which I owe to society, were I not withheld by consideration for poor

Silvio. Now leave me; and thank him that you are allowed to go free." So saying, he marched to the door, and opened it, with an imperious gesture to his unwelcome visitor.

Leone's face darkened with anger, and he seemed on the brink of some violent outburst; but he suddenly checked himself, as if unwilling to fail with the man whom he wished to propitiate for Silvio's sake, and spoke with forced calmness, though with a disdainful smile, —

"Mr. Norman, I did not come here to quarrel with you, and will not, whatever provocation you may give. As to your threat, it only shows your ignorance of this government. Before you could raise ten *gens-d'armes* to arrest me, I could summon hundreds to my rescue. Your Papal police is well enough: they can arrest the liberals, the sellers of Protestant Bibles, those who do not kneel at the passage of the Pope, even the city pickpockets perhaps, but not Leone di Montalba. They know me too well, from the Governor of Rome down to the lowest patrolman."

He spoke with such confidence, and at the same time with such contempt, that it staggered Mr. Norman, who replied, —

"So much the worse: it is a disgrace to this corrupt government. I am all the more glad to get away from it as soon as possible."

"You had better not, Mr. Norman. Listen to my request: stay just a few months longer."

"Not a single day. To-morrow evening we shall be in Naples; and the first steamer to Marseilles will take us away forever from this miserable country." He spoke with such decision, that Leone felt it to be useless for him to insist any longer. Still, unable to realize, with his Italian ideas, that Edith's broken engagement was not in obedience to her father's commands, he made one last effort.

"Will you not let me speak to your daughter alone? I may induce her to alter her resolution."

"Not for the world! It would only distress her, without affecting her decision; and, poor child! she has suffered deeply. I beg of you, leave me." And he again pointed resolutely to the door.

"I am very sorry, but still more sorry for you, Mr. Norman, for you will repent of this. Good-by! or, rather, *a rivederci!*" He said

this last word with an ominous, threatening look, and hastily left the house.

Mr. Norman stood looking after him, noting the noble carriage and haughty manner of the man upon whose head a price was set, and thought to himself, "He is a brave man; and I hate to quarrel with him, but it couldn't be helped. As to his threats — Bah! I am not afraid of him." Still that significant "*a rivederci*," said in such a threatening tone, kept ringing in his ears; and he resolved, when Edith came back, to keep her in the house for the rest of the day. He thought for a moment to ask the police, through the American consul, for a special guard during the night; but then he reflected that he should have to give a reason for it, and it might be a source of detention, if he apprised them of what had happened with Leone's band. So, on the whole, he decided not to say any thing about it, especially to Edith, for fear of alarming her; for he thought, "Whatever Leone threatens, what can he do, here in the heart of the city of Rome? and to-morrow we shall be on the way to Naples." Naples! Little did Mr. Norman suspect that

this word, which had escaped him in the heat of conversation, had been all-sufficient to determine Leone's future plan of action, and lead to that threatened *meeting again* which he considered so impossible, and which yet filled him with vague uneasiness.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROMAN MODELS.

THE steps of the Trinità del Monte, on the Piazza di Spagna, were already occupied, that morning, by the usual groups of models, waiting their chances to be called by some artist for a sitting. Among them might be seen the usual thin-haired old man with a white beard, for a St. Joseph; the *Pifferaro*, with his bag-pipe and black-eyed, sunburnt boy, in his conical hat and sheep-skin jacket, holding a tambourine; the *contadina* spinning wool; the mother with her babe; two model brigands in the traditional stage-costume, but with the sneaking faces of city pickpockets rather than of real banditti. Later on, a new group appeared, unknown to the *habitués* of the place, exciting their curiosity and jealousy, — two very handsome *contadinas*, in the newest and most picturesque of Roman dresses, their heads, ears, and

necks decorated with silver and gold ornaments, and strings of valuable beads, coral, agate, or filigree, to the astonishment of the ragged crew, whose ornaments were shams. Their heavy coils of black hair were held by stilettos, whose silver handles showed beyond their white veils; but a close examination would have betrayed that the blades were of the finest steel, good for actual use, and not of silvered brass. Their small heads, with handsome, sunburnt faces, were poised on powerful white necks and broad shoulders, which were well set off by their snow-white *chemisettes* and red-velvet bodices laced with gold. Their hands were large, but soft and white, as of people not used to hard work; and their muscular arms would have been a match for any athlete. Two *contadini*, who accompanied them, left them on the steps, saying in a whisper, "Wait here till Maso comes with orders, while we go back to look after the horses."

These two women, as the reader has already guessed, were Marcia and Clelia. They sat quietly on one of the steps, their smiles of content displaying their beautiful white teeth,

as if delighted to be in the city, and enjoyed the novelty and variety of the sights, and watched the passers-by, regardless of the whispered comments of the professional models around them. "Who are these women?" — "We never saw them before." — "New models?" — "Business is poor enough, without any more added." — "Where did they get their new clothes?" — "We must not allow them to take away our bread." — "We have been here for years, and want no new-comers." — "They are very handsome, though." — "Pooh! with such sunburnt faces and red cheeks!" — "They are surely painted." They sat quite undisturbed by the gossip and chatter about them, which was suddenly arrested by the sight of Edith and Valerio, followed by the maid, who slowly descended the steps. They were known to be artists; and, as they drew near, the models threw themselves into the poses of their assumed characters, in the hope of employment, — St. Joseph, leaning on his staff with a very sanctimonious air, looked at the child in the *contadina's* arms; she, in her turn, bent her head in maternal fondness over her infant; the other woman

spun her wool; the *Pifferaro* blew up his bagpipe; the boy stood up, holding his tambourine; above all, the two would-be brigands, in their tawdry, faded feathers and finery, red velvet jackets, and huge Roman sashes, loaded with imitation pistols and poniards, assumed such ferocious looks, and threw themselves into such attitudes of murderous attack, that they attracted the attention of Marcia and Clelia, who, struck by the ludicrous sight, burst into a fit of laughter that quite destroyed the artistic illusion they imagined themselves to be creating.

Edith and Valerio, turning at the sound, to their great surprise recognized the women of the brigands' cave. They, recognizing them as quickly, lifted their hands in astonishment, exclaiming, "*Santa Maria! La bella signorina!*" ("Holy Mary! The beautiful young lady!")

At sight of them, the stirring events and unhappy consequences with which these two women were associated flashed rapidly through Edith's mind with an irresistible sense of dread: but as quickly the memory of the kindness with

which those half-savage creatures had treated her softened this first impression; and she addressed them with a look of pity, saying in a low tone, "Marcia! Clelia! You here? How dare you venture to come to Rome?"

"Blessed signorina, we follow our husbands when they tell us to, and do what they order. It is for them to look out for us."

"What splendid models they would make!" suggested Valerio. Then, turning to them, in his usual careless way he asked, "And how are all our friends on the mountains?"

The women, the smiles with which they had greeted Edith suddenly changing to fierce, threatening frowns, haughtily replied, "Ask no questions, young man."

Valerio slunk back, utterly subdued, thinking to himself, "I declare, these are true descendants of the Lucretias and Cornelias of ancient Rome. Oh! if they were only as civilized as those matrons of old, the noble Roman race would be reproduced in the world."

Edith was warned, by the reproof to Valerio, that they did not wish to have attention drawn to them, and was about to bid them farewell,

when, in the generosity of her nature and forgiving spirit towards all, on that last day of her happy Roman life, so unexpectedly cut short, she approached them, and, taking out her silk purse, with many gold and silver pieces in it, said, "You were very kind to me: take this, and divide it among you. Keep the purse, too, to remember me by." And, before they had time to thank her, she moved quickly down the steps with tears in her eyes. Valerio followed, ejaculating to himself, "Queer people, these Americani, but generous, very generous."

As they passed on, without stopping to look at the groups or engage any of them, the models, who had noticed the gift of the purse, changed their assumed looks of sanctity or ferocity to real malignity and hate. Opprobrious epithets and insults flew like arrows, from every man and woman there assembled, against the unknown *contadinas* who had thus disturbed their equanimity. But the two would-be brigands especially, whose faces were yellow with rage, shook their fists at Marcia and Clelia, with fearful oaths and imprecations, vociferating, "Who the devil are you? Models? Why

do you come here to spoil our business, and prevent our getting some job? If you weren't women, we would break every bone in your bodies."

Marcia and Clelia stared at them at first with mirthful curiosity, and laughed the louder at their wrath. This so exasperated them, that they grew more violent than before, foaming with rage, and exhausting their whole vocabulary of bad words. They even made a feint of rising up to rush upon them. At this the mirth of the women suddenly changed to passion; and, springing like tigresses from their lairs, they pounced upon their assailants, and, shaking them furiously, cried, "Did you speak that way to us?"

"Yes, to you!" they replied with increasing rage, trying to grapple with them; but they were as helpless as children in the grasp of the excited women. "To you! you"—

They had no time to finish the sentence; for Marcia and Clelia, with an herculean effort of their powerful arms, lifted the unlucky wretches bodily, and, with a twirl, hurled them down the steps, then, drawing their stilettos from their

hair, stood undismayed, ready, like their ancestral prototype Sabina, for any attack that the two might dare to attempt. The other models, stupefied, remained crouching on their seats, not daring to interfere. The passers-by in the Piazza, used to these street-fights among the lower classes, asked, "What is it?" — "*Contrasto di parole*" ("A question of words"), and went on their way. The Papal police, even if they happened to be about, never interfered in these wordy wars among the common people, and usually got round a corner, patiently waiting until some one was killed or wounded, whom they charitably carried, when the fight was over, to the nearest hospital. Accordingly, our people were left to settle their quarrels among themselves.

The two model brigands rolled in the dust at the foot of the steps, their hats and the contents of their pockets — pipes, tobacco, a few *sous* — scattered about. They hastily endeavored to collect these, after feeling to see if they had any broken bones, before wreaking their vengeance; keeping up, meanwhile, a wrathful outpouring of oaths and imprecations, that drew

merely a contemptuous smile from the brave women, who still stood, prepared for an attack, upon the steps above.

They had almost recovered their scattered property, but were still groping in the dust close together, when a strong hand was laid upon a shoulder of each, and a cynical voice asked imperiously, "What is the row here?" It was Maso, in peasant dress, who had been sent to join the women, and wait for orders. He had witnessed their exploit, as he entered the Piazza from the via Condotti, and ran to the rescue. The two beggars, dusty and wrathful, turned like bitten dogs upon the new-comer, and, taking him for a *contadino*, replied with a snarl, "Who are you? Their ——?" and here followed another string of bad names, threats, and oaths; and all the saints in the calendar were called upon to witness the terrible revenge with which they meant to annihilate the two daring women, and any one who undertook their defence. But their vainboasting was brought to a sudden stop: a tremendous box on the ear made one of the pseudo-brigands kiss the dust again, while Maso hissed out angrily, —

"Beppo Mortilla! don't you know who you are talking to?"

The words struck the two rascals like lightning from a clear sky. Their faces, yellow with rage, turned absolutely livid with surprise and terror. They rose to their knees, and, seizing Maso's hands, kissed them, trembling and crying abjectly, "Oh! for God's sake, forgive us! forgive us! We did not recognize you: we did not know that they belonged to you. We will kiss your feet. We will kiss the ground under their feet. We will ask their forgiveness." They bent down, actually to carry out their offer; but Maso, with sneering contempt for their cowardice, kicked them away, crying, "Get up! get up! you yellow-livered curs! Here, take this, and get something to eat, and some good wine, to put some heart into you, after your scare;" and he handed them each a silver crown. They bent again to kiss his hands, exclaiming, "Thank you! The Lord bless you! St. Nicholas guard you!" Maso bestowed another good kick upon each, which they received with fawning smiles, as if it had been a caress, and shouted, "Get

out of the way! Quick! Be off with you!" And they hastily disappeared behind the pillar of the Piazza di Spagna.

He then walked up to Marcia and Clelia, saying crossly, —

"Why the deuce do you want to get into a quarrel here in Rome? The police are as thick here as quails in June. Don't you know any better than that?"

"Well, were we to stand the insults of such ragamuffins as those?"

"Come, keep quiet there, while I go down to the foot of the steps to smoke my pipe. It is too conspicuous up here."

He said nothing more to them; for Clelia being the wife of Pietraccio, and Marcia of another prominent member of the band, it would have been an insult on his part, according to the manners of those people, to have reproved them, however they might have deserved it.

He sat filling his pipe, thinking morosely to himself, "What on earth did he want of those two women in Rome? They are always in the way, and getting into trouble. What is he

aiming at now? Here we are, all scattered about in dangerous places, — we here; two at the inn, with horses and a travelling-carriage; the rest at the *massaria* (farmhouse), with horses saddled for service; he himself roaming about in this dangerous Rome. He has just gone in to that American's house, and ordered me to wait here. What does he want there? He had him in his power, and let him go without ransom. I wonder if he made a private bargain with him, and now has come to get the money, to keep himself, instead of dividing with us! H'm! It may be. The worst of it is, he never tells what he is going to do. We have to work in the dark. He says do this or that: we obey, and there is an end of it. He never asks advice, or consults any of us. True, he is always successful; but then, he ought to confide more in us, at least in me, who am an educated man. Ugh! If only Pietraccio was the chief!" He had smoked moodily for some time, watching the passers-by with indifference, when he was disturbed by the hasty approach of the brigand model whom he had called Beppo Mortilla, who whispered to him

in passing, "*Gens-d'armes* coming this way! Hide behind us!" His companion, who followed close at his heels, added, "Hide quick! they are coming!" and they ascended the steps, and took up their former positions. For only answer, Maso growled, "Get away, you rabbits!" and remained where he was; only, pushing his slouched hat on the back of his head, he stared vacantly at the smoke of his pipe with the stupid look of a country clown.

The two *gens-d'armes*, who belonged to the mounted corps, advanced majestically, with military tread, their spurs jingling, and their heavy cavalry swords clanking on the flagstones at every step. They were stalwart men, gorgeously dressed, in huge cocked hats, blue uniforms, with white and yellow sashes, large epaulets, top boots, and yellow gauntlets reaching almost to the elbow, and, to cap the whole, ferocious twirled mustaches and long imperials.

As they reached the steps, they glanced up at the groups of models. They saw nothing there worthy of attention, but, looking down, spied Maso, who, judging from his clownish look, they thought might be some common

pickpocket in disguise. They accosted him; and one, in a very authoritative tone, began to question him.

"Who are you?"

"Ehm?" replied Maso, looking still more vacant than before.

"Who are you? What is your name?"

"Maso," drawled Maso, and shook the ashes from his pipe, and lazily and unconcernedly pulled out his tobacco-pouch, in order to refill it.

"Maso what?"

"Maso Tommaso," in a stupider drawl than ever.

"Where are you from?"

"Eh? Tivoli."

"Tivoli? Where is your pass?"[1]

"My pass? Oh!—I have got it here somewhere." And he began slowly to fumble about in his numerous pockets, glancing, however, cautiously about, to see if any other officers were near, and what were his chances of escape, when he espied Leone, wrapped in his

[1] Under the Papal Government, no one could go from one city to another, even if only a few miles apart, without a regular police pass.

cloak, coming towards him. At sight of his chief, the stupid, vacant look that he had preserved changed at once into one of malice and ferocity. He pulled his hat down over his forehead, sprang to his feet close to the soldier, and, displaying the butt of a pistol, whispered threateningly in his ear, "This is my pass: another word, and I will blow your brains out!" The astonished officer started back, seeing in Maso's resolute eyes the unmistakable determination to execute his threat, while, at the same moment, his comrade heard a voice saying in a commanding tone, close to his ear, "Let that man alone!" He turned hastily, and found himself face to face with Leone.

In spite of Leone's plain civilian dress, the soldier felt at once, from his imperious tone, that he must be some one in authority; for no Roman would have dared to speak in such a peremptory manner to the *gens-d'armes;* any resistance to public authority, under the despotic rule of those days, entailing upon a man an indefinite period of imprisonment. He therefore asked, in a deferential tone, "Who are you, sir?"

Leone flashed a look of defiance at him, put his hand in the breast of his coat, and replied haughtily, —

"Leone di Montalba."

The two *gens-d'armes* started at the name, the one who had questioned Maso giving him a look of recognition. They looked round the Piazza di Spagna, to see if there were any other officers near; but there were none. They tried anxiously to spy some pickpocket at his trade, some *gamin* stealing fruit, some hackman standing too near the fountain, upon whom they might pounce, to hide their defeat, but in vain: they had to make the best of it as it was. They exchanged a meaning look, lifted their heavy swords under their arms, touched their hats with their gloved fingers, and marched off in military style, their heads higher, their spurs jingling more noisily, than before, and disappeared round the nearest corner. The two stood watching their retreat; and Maso, chuckling and pointing, said with a sneer, "The Papal police! The Papal police! Ah! ah! ah!"

It may seem strange that these two *gens-d'armes* did not attempt the arrest of such a famous brigand-chief, and gain the price set on his head; but it is easily explained. They knew that these men, outlawed and desperate, would never let themselves be taken, but would sell their lives dearly. The killing of an officer, more or less, would add but little to the total of their crimes. They never went about unprotected; and there might have been dozens of people ready to help them resist the police, and escape. The slightest attempt, on their part, to arrest one of them, would send a bullet through their heads, or a stiletto into their backs, before assistance from other officers could reach them. The law of self-preservation is as strong with such men as with anybody else. The police force of the Roman and Neapolitan States, in those days, was recruited from the very dregs of the populace; for no respectable man would accept such a position, hated and despised by every one, even by the very government that employed them. They were good enough for the petty thieves of the city, very efficient against the liberals, the po-

litical conspirators, the offenders against religious observances; but, as to brigands, there was altogether too much risk about it, and they did not care to expose their precious lives in any such ventures. Their nets were strong enough to catch flies, but such wild animals could sweep them away with a stroke of their claws. And, as to the price set on the heads of brigands, it read well enough in the governor's proclamations; but, even if earned, how much of it would ever reach the soldier's pocket? If the brigand was killed (and it was very seldom that they were taken alive), that vitiated the reward. But even if successful, there were so many deductions, so many people among whom it was to be divided, — the spies who gave the clew, the clerks who forwarded the orders or information, the superior officers who directed the movements, — that little or none came into the pockets of those who did the work. And there were very few really honest and conscientious in the service: those that were not knew that they could earn a great deal more by being conveniently blind, to say nothing of keeping a whole skin. It is an historical fact, that no

famous brigand was ever arrested in the city of Rome or Naples, or, indeed, in any city, during the Papal and Bourbon Governments; though they went in and out constantly, and arranged most of their plans in them. A noted brigand-chief, then infesting the country about Salerno, was once pointed out to the author in the principal *café* of Naples, unconcernedly taking an ice with a friend, while swarms of police were walking up and down the place, scrutinizing every stranger, especially Northern Italians, for fear of their being political agitators from liberal Piedmont.

Two hours later a covered travelling-carriage, drawn by swift horses, and containing Marcia, Clelia, and one of the men, left Rome, followed at a respectful distance by Leone and Maso on horseback. They crossed the Campania to the cattle-farm where the other members of the band had remained, and there they put up for the night.

Edith, escorted by Valerio, returned home. Home? It had been so for more than three years, but now how desolate it looked! The works of art, antiques, carpets, bric-à-brac, — the accumulations of three-years' residence, — had all been packed up, and stowed away in some warehouse, to be forwarded when they had settled upon a new home; so that only the scanty, shabby furniture of the original lodging remained, the bare walls still showing traces where the pictures had hung. A trunk or two, a valise waiting to be strapped, stood in the way in the bedrooms: the rest of the house was almost empty, the cook and two women half in tears, silently preparing the dinner. On entering the house, Edith felt her heart sink within her. She had experienced a shock at the sight of Marcia and Clelia, and her disquiet was increased when she noticed her father's disturbed look; for, notwithstanding his utmost efforts to appear calm, he could not wholly conceal the emotions and suspicions aroused by the conversation with Leone: but they had both decided not to mention these incidents to each other, unwilling to allude to a subject

so painful, and which had been the means of breaking up the happy life that they had led in Rome.

Dinner was hardly more than a formality. Valerio once or twice attempted to start some subject of conversation, but in vain. He was naturally lively, and full of fun, when every thing went smoothly; but at the same time he was the first to be despondent in any serious trouble. Therefore, as soon as dinner was over, he thought it best to leave them alone, as he could cheer neither them nor himself. Promising to be there early next morning, to see them off to the station, he took his leave. In going out he happened to glance into the *café* opposite the house, brilliantly illuminated, and furnished with large mirrors. In one of these he caught the reflection of a face which struck him as familiar. He stopped a moment to see who it was, and, to his great astonishment, recognized one of Leone's band, whom he had seen at the Castellaccio of Sonnino. "What can this man be doing in Rome, and at this *café?*" he thought. "Something must be up; for these scoundrels don't

come to the city, at the risk of being caught, merely to drink lemonade in a *café*." But he was too much depressed to pay any special attention to the matter: and, after walking about a street or two for exercise, he returned to his studio; its loneliness, without his old comrade, affected him painfully in his dejected state of mind. He determined, after seeing his friends off in the morning, to take the afternoon train for Sonnino, and spend a week or two with Silvio: so he packed his valise, and prepared to retire. As he raised his arm to turn out the gas in the studio, he happened to glance at the St. Jerome, which hung directly in front of him. He could not resist shaking his fist at him, and wishing him anywhere else but in this world. Then he went to bed, and dreamed of brigands, stilettos, pistols, attacks, and tumult.

CHAPTER XVI.

LEAVING ROME.

EDITH was glad to retire early, on the plea of being ready for the following day; for she longed to be alone. She seemed resigned; but it was the resignation of a high-minded woman, whose heart suffers the more keenly for its outward calm. She tried to sleep, but in vain, so many sweet and bitter fancies thronged her brain. It was her last night in Rome, — Rome, the dream of her youth, when, a mere child, she read her history, and studied art, — the ancient and mediæval wonders which she had seen in prints and photographs, and which it had been such a delight to her afterwards to realize. She recalled happy days spent in the museums and churches, the gardens and old ruins, the sketches she had made at every season of the year, when her heart was free, and her only ambition to excel in land-

scape, which was her passion, fostered by the primeval grandeur and varied beauties of her native country. But when she came to know Silvio and admire his works, how much higher an accomplishment seemed the study of the human form! Silvio! How many reminiscences that thought evoked, — the first visit to his studio; the first introduction; the first suspicion of interest; the first look of love; the numberless acts and words, doubts and fears, ending in his avowal that fatal evening on the Pincio; his first kiss, still burning on her forehead. And then — The rest seemed all confusion. Like a happy party sailing in fancied security on a smiling summer day, along a charming coast studded with villages and farms, woody promontories, lofty cliffs crowned with lighthouses, the water gently murmuring at their base, sandy havens swarming with white sails and fishing-boats; suddenly a black squall rises from the sea, covering the sky with threatening clouds, turning the waters to ink, the gentle murmur to the hiss of a serpent, the soft swell to surging billows; the dazzling lightning cleaves the sky, followed by a roll of

thunder, flash after flash, peal upon peal; the wind, rising to a gale, lashes the frail bark, tears her sail to rags, and tosses her like a nutshell upon the strand, where the affrighted pleasure-seekers cling to each other, breathless and bewildered at their miraculous escape, — so felt poor Edith. And, when she finally sank into the sleep of utter exhaustion, it was broken by sudden starts and fantastic dreams.

She dreamed of her New-England home, and herself again a child, enjoying its pastoral pleasures, and making her first attempts in drawing; of the mother of whom she had but a faint, shadowy recollection; but now, with the inconsistency of dreams, she was caring for her, kissing and caressing her, showing her pictures and telling her their stories. Sitting on the veranda together, they turn the pages of an illustrated atlas. Country after country they see, — China and Japan, India, Russia; here is Italy — Etna, Vesuvius, St. Peter's, the Colosseum. It is no longer her own mother, but Silvio's, who is showing her these picturesque *contadinas*, these shepherds in their conical hats: who are they? Silvio leans over his

mother's shoulder, and says, "This is Marcia; this is Clelia; and this shepherd is my father, Leone."

The name of Leone sent a sudden thrill of fear through her, and she awoke with a cry of terror. It was already daylight; and a feeling of relief came over her at the thought that it was only a dream, and that she had slept for the last time in Rome.

Youth and health have this advantage, — that they can resist grief, not sink under it. When Edith joined her father she seemed cheerful; and he kissed her good-morning, saying gently, "Darling Edith, I lost your dear mother when only a little older than you are, but I did not despair: I bore it patiently, and gradually became cheerful for your sake. I sympathize with you, and feel keenly for your loss; but you will also bear it patiently, and by degrees we may become happy again."

"Father," she replied, looking fondly into his face, "I will bear it for your sake, and I will try to make you happy." They said no more, but, snatching a hasty breakfast, prepared for their journey. Valerio came in good season

to escort them to the station, where they were to take the morning train for Naples.

The railroad from Rome to Naples was at that time unfinished: it ran only about twenty-five miles; then stage-coaches, which were in waiting, took the passengers to the station of Ceprano, a distance of some ten miles, where they again took the train to Naples.

When our party arrived at the station, there was the usual bustle and hurry-scurry preceding the departure of trains. Only a few passengers were going through to Naples: the rest were country people going back to their towns, and taking second or third class cars. Our travellers took their seats in a first-class compartment; and, while they were settling themselves in their places, Valerio stood on the platform to bid them the last farewell. Happening to look around, whom should he spy but the member of Leone's band whom he had seen the night before in the *café* opposite Mr. Norman's house. The man, in his turn, appeared to recognize Valerio; for he turned quickly, as if to escape being spoken to, and entered a second-class compartment. Some

suspicion rose in Valerio's mind, as he recalled the presence of Marcia and Clelia in Rome the day before. "What can they be doing in Rome?" he thought. "They are up to some mischief, surely." He hesitated for a moment whether to tell Mr. Norman; but then, what was the use of arousing his suspicions? They could not possibly have any designs on him, for he was safely on his way to Naples. He decided not to mention it; for the cars were just ready to start, and there would be no time to explain. The train moved; and Valerio waved a last farewell, doubting if he should ever meet them again. He returned moodily to his studio, and sat down before his easel to while away the time till the afternoon, when he would go to Sonnino.

The train started at moderate speed, stopping at every little station. They passed the interminable ruined arches of the Aqueduct, gradually losing sight of the city, except the dome of St. Peter's, which every now and then loomed up on the horizon, until finally that also disappeared, as they entered the cultivated fields and hilly country of Albano. As they

increased their distance from Rome, Mr. Norman's heart swelled with a sense of freedom and relief, as if escaping from dangerous ground, while poor Edith's grew more and more heavy, breaking away from this last link that bound her to so many sweet memories.

"What a beautiful country this is, if only it were blessed with liberty!" exclaimed Mr. Norman, enchanted with the scenery; for, though it was October, the fields were as bright and green as in June. "What a paradise on earth it would be, if the people were only more civilized!"

"Oh, yes! father, beautiful, too beautiful," replied Edith with a sigh, thinking that she was leaving it forever. They remained silent for a long time, watching with admiration the changing landscape as the train swept by. When they arrived at the terminus, where they were to take the stages for Ceprano in the Neapolitan States, as there were only a few passengers, Mr. Norman bribed the employees not to put any other occupant into the coach with them. Only a second-class passenger, to whom they paid no attention, took a seat on the box

with the driver: it was the brigand whom Valerio had noticed at the station. When all were seated, and the baggage strapped on, the five coaches which composed the line set out, at a quick trot, to traverse the ten miles of unfinished railroad. They had gone about half way, when, at a place where the main road was crossed by one leading to the hills, they saw a travelling-carriage which apparently had met with some accident; for the occupants were standing by it, surrounded by a number of *contadini*, and, under the direction of a gentleman in hunting-dress, seemed busy lashing the axle with ropes. Two peasant women stood by the wall, watching them, while some men held two handsome saddle-horses belonging to the party. The line of coaches had to slacken their speed as they passed the obstruction, which was in the middle of the road; and the party on foot stepped closer to the carriage, and stopped their work, as if to let them go by. One, two coaches went slowly round, and then, with a crack of the whip, resumed their smart trot. The third one, containing Mr. Norman and Edith, was following; but, when just abreast

of the group, the man seated beside the driver seized the reins out of his hands, and, with a sudden pull, stopped the horses, at the same time pointing a pistol at his head, threatening, if he resisted, to blow his brains out. At the same moment, a shrill whistle was heard; and, from behind the walls on either side of the road, sprang a swarm of men in peasant dress, but with pistols in their hands, who, joined by those around the carriage, surrounded the three coaches, threatening death to any one that stirred. The two women, who were Marcia and Clelia, ran to the coach occupied by Mr. Norman and Edith, the doors of which had been opened by the armed men, and cried, "Come with us, signorina, and have no fear." At sight of them Edith knew into whose hands they had again fallen, and, turning pale, clung to her father. Resistance was useless. Mr. Norman was held firmly by several of the men who had jumped into the coach; and Marcia and Clelia, snatching Edith up bodily, carried her to the travelling-carriage, and got into it with her. One man mounted the box with the driver, who, whipping up the horses, started at

a full run up the cross-road. The two women held a handkerchief over Edith's mouth to stifle any outcry, but said soothingly, at the same time, "Don't be frightened, signorina, don't be frightened! No harm will be done to you."

"Oh, my poor father! My poor father!" she exclaimed, when they partially released her. "Where are you taking me? Why have you done this to me? I was surely good to you."

"Yes, yes, good signorina! and we mean no harm to you. And, indeed, you will thank us for this by and by, for we are taking you to your *innamorato*."

The word "*innamorato*" sounded like a revelation, and even a relief, in her sudden fright. "But could Silvio have had any thing to do with this?" she thought, with a momentary flash of suspicion; but recalling his gentleness, and tender, loving disposition, she exclaimed, "No, no, that is impossible!" However, she felt relieved of the anxiety and terror that had overpowered her at the sudden attack, on her father's account, as well as her own; for now she felt sure that they would not molest him, and she resigned herself to what fate might

have in store for her, convinced that no personal injury was meant to either of them.

The carriage, meanwhile, flew over the road, closely followed by Maso and Leone on horseback. The latter, when he had seen Edith safe in the carriage between the women, mounted his horse, and gave a signal to his men to disperse. Passing close to Mr. Norman, who was still held in the coach by two men, he said to him in a tone of reproach, "It is your own fault: you would have it so. I warned you to beware, for no man yet has dared to oppose Leone." Then, ordering the men to release him, he approached still closer, and whispered hastily, "Fear not for your daughter, but she *shall* marry my son in spite of you;" and, setting spurs to his horse, he dashed off after the carriage, followed by Maso, and was soon lost to sight in the cloud of dust. The other men, returning their pistols, the only weapons they had displayed, to their pockets, climbed over the stone walls again, and dispersed in various directions, looking in no way different from any of the peasants working in the fields. The whole affair had not occupied ten minutes, and

the only trace left behind was Mr. Norman's empty coach.

He had remained for a moment as if paralyzed; but Leone's last words, though re-assuring as to any violence intended against Edith, yet indicated his set purpose to compel her to marry Silvio against his and her own wishes. This roused his indignation; and he cried in answer, "You have mistaken your man this time, for I hold you in my power; and within twenty-four hours you will be in the hands of justice, as you deserve, even if you are Silvio's father." But Leone was already too far off to hear his threat.

The two coaches in advance had heard the commotion; and, supposing it an actual attack of brigands, the drivers merely whipped their horses into a gallop, so as to get away as fast as possible. The two that followed stopped: the passengers, terror-struck, dared not move till all was over, and the brigands had disappeared. Then they asked each other, "What was it? A capture! Some rich foreigner? Of course. Whom do you expect them to take, — us? We haven't got a hundred francs." Thus

re-assured, they went on their way, with many expressions of sympathy for Mr. Norman.

Mr. Norman, remaining alone in the coach, thought at first of following the carriage; but a moment's reflection convinced him of the futility of the attempt, and he ordered it to hasten back to the Roman station to take the return train. He was fortunate in finding it just ready to proceed; and an hour later he was again in Rome.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE GOVERNOR OF ROME.

WHEN Mr. Norman alighted from the train, he went directly to Valerio's studio, and found him still seated before his easel, though doing very little work. The astonishment of the young artist at the sight of Mr Norman again, and in such a state of excitement, may be easily imagined. "What has happened?" he exclaimed.

"They have taken away my poor Edith," was all that Mr. Norman could say, as he sank exhausted into a chair. Valerio dropped palette and brushes, rushed to him, and, seizing his hands, cried, "Don't, don't give way so! Tell me about it."

Mr. Norman, gradually recovering his self-possession, related the events of the morning, and ended by saying, "After such an outrage, no further feeling of consideration for poor

Silvio can restrain me. I told you some time ago that I held Leone and his band in the hollow of my hand; and I will now make use of my power. Come with me, for I need a friendly face near me. I will go first to the American consul, and ask him to lay a complaint before the governor of Rome, who has supreme control over all the police of the Papal States."

"What do you mean to do?" asked Valerio, who had an instinctive dread of being mixed up with the police, common to all honest Italians of those days.

"Do? I have no time to explain now. But will you come with me?"

"Why, yes, indeed, dear Mr. Norman! at once." However averse to the police, Valerio's impulsive nature was too kindly to desert a friend. So they went immediately to the American consulate, where Mr. Norman was well known. He related the case to the consul, asking his official assistance. This functionary, indignant that an American lady should have been subjected to such violence, agreed to lay the case at once before the governor of Rome.

The official residence was a huge mediæval palace, whose massive walls, darkened by age and neglect, looked mournful and gloomy. The few lower windows were grated with strong iron bars, from behind which peeped out the faces of the motley crew who had been arrested the night before, waiting to be examined, and either sent to the various prisons or released. Two police sentries, in full uniform, mounted guard before the great entrance door, while some twenty others lounged about on benches and settees under the vaulted archway. The court-yard was crowded with police-officers coming and going, men and women, friends of the arrested, and suspicious-looking nondescripts prowling about.

They went up the wide marble staircase, that looked as if no broom had ever touched it, and entered a large hall lined with benches, but so crowded, that many were standing, or walking about, waiting patiently their turn to be admitted by the ushers, who stood at the different doors to confer with the officers closeted within. Our party had to wait until the return of the usher, who had taken the consul's card de-

siring an interview with the governor on very urgent business. Mr. Norman looked about; and, to his astonishment, he noticed that most of the people there were priests, or, at least, wore priestly garments; and some nuns were among them, but such faces! His only knowledge of priests had been, till then, the amiable, venerable face of Father Francesco, and the higher clergy he had seen officiating in the churches. Now and then he had met some lugubrious, shabby-looking priests about the streets, but he had not taken much notice of them; but here he saw such a collection of cadaverous, rascally-looking faces, that he thought to himself, "Really, if I had to choose, I had rather be among Leone's brigands than with such a blackguard-looking set." He had not much time to think about them, however; for the usher returned, inviting the consul and Mr. Norman to enter the governor's private cabinet in advance of the others awaiting an audience. Valerio, meanwhile, remained in the hall.

They passed through several rooms filled with clerks at their desks; and Mr. Norman noticed that those who seemed chiefs were in-

variably priests, and that the others were, for the most part, dressed in dark garments, the sanctimonious expression on their faces hardly in keeping with the sharp, black eyes that peered curiously at the visitors, though their heads were not raised from their writing. Finally they reached the governor's room, the usher introducing them, and shutting the door after them. It was a small room, elegantly, though rather sombrely furnished, — dark walls, on which hung several pictures of saints, or, rather, martyrs; two large bookcases; two sofas; several arm-chairs; and a square table covered with a green cloth, loaded with piles upon piles of papers, in the midst of which stood an ebony cross, upon which hung an antique ivory Christ, and in front of it an enormous bronze inkstand. Mr. Norman took little notice of this, his attention being at once drawn to the governor himself, who had risen from his mediæval arm-chair, politely greeting the consul, and inviting him to a chair at his side. He was a monsignore, dressed in his elegant violet robe, with the priest's violet skull-cap on his head: though, like many of the monsign-

ores, he was not a full priest, having taken only the lower orders; for it is one of the peculiarities of the Church of Rome, that a man taking the lower orders and the vow of celibacy may become a monsignore, then a cardinal, and even pope, without being either priest or bishop. He was very neat in his person, except the thumb and forefinger of his right hand, with which he constantly took a pinch of snuff from an open box on the table, which he inhaled with great gusto, carefully brushing away what dropped on his breast with a delicate cambric handkerchief. He was about fifty years old, with very polished manners, clean-shaven, his features sharp and thin, his eyes small and gray, with a peculiar whitish ring around the pupils, which, as they gleamed under heavy, bushy eyebrows, on either side of a very aquiline nose, gave him the look of a night-hawk. His thin, shapeless lips, when parted by a caustic smile, displayed broken, discolored teeth.

The consul introduced Mr. Norman as a highly respectable American citizen, who had resided in Rome for over three years; and

stated, that, on his way to Naples that morning, he had been surprised by a band of brigands, under the famous Leone, and his daughter carried off as hostage.

"Leone again!" exclaimed the governor. "Why, it is only last week that he committed a most daring robbery against the State! How is it that I have not been informed sooner of this?"

"It only happened two or three hours ago."

"Yes; but time enough for the several police-stations along that line to have learned of it, and informed us." He rang the bell, and gave orders for immediate inquiries to be instituted concerning it; then, turning to Mr. Norman, he begged for a detailed account of the occurrence. Mr. Norman gave it, and, in addition, the narrative of his previous capture by the band, and release by Leone, and ended by declaring, that, if the governor would intrust to his direction a sufficient force, he would undertake to surprise and arrest the outlaws, and release his daughter; for, on that former occasion, he had learned the hiding-place of the band, to which he was certain his daughter had

been carried. He, however, avoided any reference to Silvio's engagement to Edith, or to his relationship to Leone: he even, to avoid questions, abstained from mentioning that Silvio and Valerio were with him in that first capture.

The governor listened with the closest attention, showing no surprise, and interrupting with no questions. Now and then he would contract his thin lips more than usual, with a dubious glance at his interlocutor, as if suspecting some reticences on the part of Mr. Norman. At the end, he remained for a while absorbed in thought; then, turning to the consul, though speaking to both, he said, —

"This is a most extraordinary occurrence, Mr. Consul, and an unprecedented one. You have my full sympathy, and all the power which is at my disposal for the young lady's release. His Holiness will be much grieved; for I must apprise his Eminence, the Secretary of State, at once. He will regret most deeply that such an outrage should have been committed in the Roman States. Still I must beg to question you further in this matter, Mr. Norman; for there are circumstances about it which are in-

comprehensible to me. Leone has been an outlaw for the last twenty-five years, — much to our regret, for he has evaded all the means used by my predecessors and myself for his arrest; but, in all that time, I never knew him to molest a woman or a foreigner. You say that he captured you and your daughter while sketching on the mountain at Sonnino, and then released you without ransom?"

"We were surprised by his band," corrected Mr. Norman, "who took us to a cave on the top of the mountain, — a place called Castellaccio; but when Leone, who was away at the time, returned, he released us, because his band had acted without his orders."

"Why did you not report this to the Roman authorities?" asked the governor with a scrutinizing look that almost disconcerted Mr. Norman, who replied with some hesitation, —

"I was rather excited, and thought it better to get away from the country than to have any more trouble about it."

"Did you not know, that, in so doing, you committed a misdemeanor punishable, under our laws, by imprisonment?"

Mr. Norman stared, unable to grasp the idea that he, the aggrieved party, should actually have rendered himself liable to imprisonment; but the consul came to his relief.

"My countryman, governor, acted in absolute ignorance of the special laws enacted for the extirpation of brigandage."

"Of course, of course. I fully understand that; but I cannot understand why Leone should capture these foreigners again, and detain the young lady. Had he held you, and sent your daughter to collect and forward the ransom, it would have been more natural."

"I cannot give his reasons, governor: I can only state the facts," replied Mr. Norman.

The governor reflected a while.

"And you think, that, if you had a sufficient force, you could find your way to the Castellaccio, and surprise the band?"

"I am sure I can."

"You will expose yourself to great risk, and your daughter also, in undertaking such a perilous business."

"I am willing to run the risk for the sake of law and justice," replied Mr. Norman with

proud decision. The governor fixed his keen eyes upon him, as if wondering in his own mind what sort of moral stuff the man was made of. Then, as if coming to some conclusion, he said, rising, "Gentlemen, please wait a few moments for me here, while I consult with the chief of our police service; and then I will give you the result of our deliberations on this serious matter."

The consul and Mr. Norman remained alone for a long time; the former endeavoring to explain to his astonished countryman the arbitrary, unjust, and despotic laws enacted against brigandage, which worked harm invariably upon the innocent or ignorant, seldom or never upon the guilty or on the brigands themselves. Had they been able to hear the conversation that was going on at the same moment in the next room, they would have been more than astonished.

The governor entered the next room, which was occupied by a man in citizen's dress, though he had a military air: he was seated at a desk, looking over piles of despatches, while clerks were constantly coming in and out with papers

and documents that required his signature. His face was coarse, with bushy hair and side-whiskers, and so savage an expression of eye, that any one meeting him at the head of a band of cut-throats and robbers would have said that he was the right man in the right place. He rose respectfully on the entrance of the governor, who, dismissing with a gesture the clerks standing about, drew him to a sofa in the farthest corner of the room, and sat there while they held the following whispered conversation: —

"Have you received news of Leone's capture of this morning?"

"I have just received a report from the post nearest the place, which I was going to bring in to you as soon as you had dismissed your visitors."

He spoke indifferently, as if it were a mere matter of form.

"Those visitors are the American consul, and the father of the young lady who was carried off, who is an American."

"The American consul! An American!" repeated the subordinate, the question appar-

ently assuming at once a serious turn. "The report does not state that: it says simply a young woman."

He rose, as if to fetch the document, but the governor pulled him down to his seat again.

"I tell you she is an American." And he then briefly narrated the story, including the previous capture of Mr. Norman and Edith.

"An American, and a woman!" exclaimed the subordinate with amazement, after his chief's recital, as if only those two words had made any impression on his mind. Then he added conclusively, "Leone must have lost his senses."

"Certainly he must. He has never in his life before done any thing like this. He knew too much to lay hands on priests, women, or foreigners; and now, all of a sudden, he seizes a woman, and a foreigner too. He really must have lost his head. A pretty rumpus there will be; for I must report the case to-night to his Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State, who will report it to-morrow to his Holiness the Pope, and you can imagine the consequences! There will be protests from all the

foreign embassies, diplomatic notes from all the foreign governments, whose subjects come to Rome by the thousand, and spend so much money here. An American, and a lady, stopped, and taken as hostage, in the public highway, nay, in the government mail-coach itself! What will his Holiness say? What will the Secretary of State say? And where will you and I be, if such things can take place with impunity? All my ordinances and special decrees against brigands, all my rewards offered for their arrest, avail nothing. As you say, he *must* have lost his head."

His subordinate sat thinking a while; then, as if an idea had suddenly come into his head, he said with a sly look, —

"Could it be possible that he fell in love with the young lady when he saw her the first time, and tried this game to possess her by force?"

"Nonsense! He is too old for that sort of thing."

"I can think of nothing else, except that he has gone mad."

"And here we have the father of the young

woman, who seems to be a very resolute man, and who proposes to lead in person a force sufficient to surprise Leone and his band in their fastness, having learned the way to it when he was first taken. I have no excuse for refusing; but what will be the consequences, if he should succeed in arresting Leone?" inquired the governor with an anxious look.

The other reflected very seriously for a time, then, exchanging a meaning glance with his superior, replied slowly, —

"Leone must not be taken alive!"

"Of course not: it would be very dangerous. But how is it to be avoided?"

"That is easily managed. Besides, Leone is not the man to allow himself to be caught napping. This American little knows with whom he has to deal. He may lose his own life in the attempt; but that is his lookout. The thing has come to such a pass, that the band *must* be arrested; and we had better get the credit of it by our prompt action. I am sorry for Leone," he continued, looking slyly at the governor; "but he has brought it upon himself. He should not have meddled with women, espe-

cially foreigners. Leave the direction of the affair to me; and by to-morrow we will have the whole band in our power, and Leone disposed of."

"What force will you need?"

"No *gens-d'armes*, monsignore. I dare not trust them too far. Place a regiment of regular troops under my orders; and out of them I will select an officer and some fifty picked men to go with this American to-night, to surprise the band: with the rest I will proceed to Sonnino, to prevent any attempt to liberate the men when brought in as prisoners; for they have their wives and sweethearts, their relatives and confederates, who, unless overawed by a superior force, might attempt a rescue. And, if Leone should not get killed in the surprise of the Castellaccio, I will manage somehow or other to dispose of him afterwards."

The governor thought the matter over, then somewhat reluctantly assented. "Very well: I see no better way out of it. I will settle the matter with the American; and you, meanwhile, prepare the necessary orders for the military operations."

He took a large pinch of snuff from his subordinate's box, and, carefully brushing away the dust from his violet robe, re-entered the room where Mr. Norman and the consul were impatiently waiting. He resumed his seat, and, with a courteous smile, addressed Mr. Norman.

"I have arranged with the chief of police for your proposed undertaking; and we have agreed to allow you to lead a party of troops to surprise Leone and his band in their hiding place, and release your daughter. The chief himself will proceed to Sonnino to-night, with a regiment to support your movement. He will call upon you, as soon as he has given the proper orders, to make the final arrangements; and I trust that the undertaking will be successful. It will be a great honor and credit to you, Mr. Norman, if, by your means, this ferocious band, that has infested the Roman States for so many years, should be broken up."

"I have not the slightest doubt of my success, governor, if I have the right sort of men."

"You will have a picked company, with a brave officer, from the regular army."

"Very well, sir: I shall be in Signor Valerio's studio, and at your orders, for the rest of the day," said Mr. Norman, giving the address. He and the consul rose to depart; and the governor escorted them politely to the door, saying to the consul, "I hope you will report to your government the prompt action I have taken in this affair, and that I have placed the whole power of the government at your disposal for the protection of the American travellers in our States. I will also inform you to-morrow of the success of the expedition, as soon as the messages which I shall arrange for reach me."

The consul thanked him in the name of his government, and they took their leave.

As the usher closed the door, the smile died away from the governor's face. He paced up and down the room several times; then, pausing before a superb antique cabinet, richly carved, he opened a drawer which was filled with rolls of gold coin, and, thoughtfully shaking his head, muttered, "It is too bad, too bad! He has been faithful to a fault, and very liberal. Here is the money he sent me only a few days

ago; and now, before even I had time to invest it, I have had to consent to his disposal. It is really too bad! What on earth put it into his head to meddle with a woman, and, worse, a foreigner? I had no alternative: he made himself too dangerous, and must pay the penalty of his imprudence. *Mors tua, vita mea.*" He closed the money-drawer carefully, as he quoted the Latin in his priestly way, and sat down at his desk again, absorbed in deep thought.

Valerio waited and waited in the hall, repeatedly accosted by some of the motley crowd of priests and nondescripts; and, from their curious questionings, he came to the conclusion that they were all government spies, nuns included. Finally he seated himself in a corner, and refused to speak to any one, disgusted at finding himself in such detestable company. Never was man more glad, on the re-appearance of the consul and Mr. Norman, to get away from that ominous locality. After leaving the consul at his office, Mr. Norman accompanied Valerio to his studio, where he had left his valise, not caring to return to his old lodg-

ings without Edith. There he related to him the arrangements entered into with the governor, and then explained the means by which he expected to get at the cave of Leone.

"You see, when they blindfolded us, I could still perceive this compass; and with this pencil," showing them to Valerio, still hanging on his watch-chain, "I marked the bearings, and the number of steps, on my cuffs, and here it is." He took out the paper he had been drawing upon, that evening after their return, which had so puzzled Valerio, and showed him the sort of map he had made, with the bearings and distances all marked, concluding, "And with this I am positive that we can catch them unawares, and arrest the whole lot."

Valerio opened his eyes wide at this explanation, and said to himself, "I always thought that these Americani were queer people; but I am beginning to find out that they are as 'cute' (*furbi*) as Lucifer."

"You will go with us?" asked Mr. Norman.

"Why, of course," replied Valerio, without thinking of the danger. Soon after, the chief of police, with the army officer who was to

command the picked men, called on Mr. Norman, and they arranged the details of the expedition. When they left, Mr. Norman took Valerio to a shooting-gallery, and practised for a while with his revolver, saying, "This time I will have my weapon with me." Valerio also, at his suggestion, but without much relish for it, did the same.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE IMPROVISED CHART.

IT was only after dark that the army officer, who had been detailed to act under Mr. Norman's orders, came, accompanied by an orderly, to fetch him and Valerio in a travelling-carriage, with relays of fresh horses ordered all along the road. The rest of the command had been despatched at different hours and by different routes, so as not to arouse suspicion, to *rendezvous* about two in the morning at the chapel on the Castellaccio slope of the Sonnino mountain. They were ordered not even to pass through the village, — for any such movement of troops would have been at once notified to the band by some of their numerous adherents, called *manutengoli*, — but to proceed through by-paths, to the appointed place. The larger body of men, however, under the orders of the chief of police,

had been drawn from a garrison in a neighboring town, whence they were to march on Sonnino so as to reach it at daylight; and the chief of police left Rome in the afternoon to take command of them.

Our party travelled very quickly, Mr. Norman, exhausted by the excitement and fatigues of the day, trying to sleep in the carriage; but the thought of poor Edith, her anxiety, and her fears, constantly roused him as often as he fell into a doze, while Valerio spent the time thinking what a scrape he had got into, and what a miracle it would be if he got out of it without a bullet in his head, winding up his foreboding thought always with the exclamation, "Oh, why could not that girl have fallen in love with me! All this trouble would have been avoided."

An hour or so after midnight they reached Sonnino. They did not enter the village, but stopped at the police-station just outside of it, where they found donkeys and a guide awaiting them; and, proceeding to the little chapel, they found the command already assembled. Mr. Norman had explained to the officer his plan

of action, but they thought it best not to mention it to the soldiers until the moment of starting. The men, instead of their uniforms, wore hunting-costumes, provided by the governor, so as to attract less attention if met by the peasants, and were armed only with short carbines and revolvers. They rested here some time; Mr. Norman calculating the distance, so as to reach the summit just before dawn. When he gave the word, leading the way with a dark lantern, they followed him up to the level place where they had been seized by the brigands: there he took out his map and compass, and began the steep ascent, carefully counting every step, followed, single file, by the officer, Valerio, and the long line of soldiers, who sometimes, in the quick turns and windings of the path, formed a triangle, or a zigzag, and frequently even crossed the lines already traversed; for the brigands, besides blindfolding their prisoners, had purposely walked about in all directions, in order to bewilder them. The men moved silently, and with every precaution against unnecessary noise. On one of these windings, however, Mr.

Norman came upon a sheep that happened to be sleeping in the path: it started up affrighted, and, waking several others sleeping near, the whole flock started down the declivity. Mr. Norman turned his lantern towards them, and luckily the flash fell upon a shepherd-boy, who had also been aroused, and was creeping away upon all fours to escape detection. "Stop! Stop that boy!" cried Mr. Norman in a louder voice (for hitherto they had spoken only in whispers), and levelled his revolver at him. Two or three soldiers ran after him, with their carbines pointed, and brought him to a stand. He looked bewildered, and trembled with fright at the sudden surprise; but Mr. Norman, remembering that they had met such a boy when they were first captured, ordered them to keep him under guard at the rear, and to watch that he should not give warning to the outlaws, whose hiding-place was now so near. It was a most fortunate circumstance; for, if that boy had escaped them, they would have found a marksman behind every projecting rock on the summit of Castellaccio, and not a man of them would have reached it alive. Half an hour

later they reached the space at the top; and Mr. Norman, still carefully counting his steps, reached the opposite side, close to a rocky cliff. He stopped, whispering to the officer, "Here must be the entrance to the cave."

The officer looked about, saying, "But I see nothing but solid rock here." Valerio and the soldiers, as they came crowding up, looked all around, but could discover neither entrance nor sign of an opening, not even a crevice in the rocks.

Mr. Norman wavered for a moment, thinking, "Could I have made a miscalculation?" He examined his map again most carefully, and said, "No! I cannot be mistaken: the entrance must be here." And he lightly struck the rock before him with a stick which he had in his hand. To the surprise of all, it gave a hollow sound. At this, fully convinced of his correctness, he continued, "I know it is here; and there must be a door or gate to it, for I heard the hinges grate. But let us wait for daylight, and rest a while, to get our breath after such a steep climb." They all sat down among the rocks, waiting for the coming dawn, and taking

a draught from their flasks, for the night air bit shrewdly at that elevation.

They had not long to wait. Soon surrounding objects began to grow distinct. The sun tinged with gold the peaks of the higher mountains around: it would soon illumine the ragged cliffs where they were sitting. At this moment Mr. Norman noticed the shepherd-boy, who sat shivering with cold and fright between two soldiers.

"That boy ought to know; for I am sure he is the one we met down there a short time before we were attacked that first time," whispered he to the officer.

"Whether the same or not, it makes no difference: these mountain shepherds are all in connivance with the brigands. I will manage him, and force him to divulge the secret."

He went up to the boy, and, pointing his revolver at his head, said in a low but threatening tone, —

"There is an entrance to a cave here, and you know where it is. Tell me how to open it, or I will send a bullet through your head."

The terrified boy, pale and trembling, cried, "O captain! I do not know" —

The officer instantly stopped his mouth with his left hand, whispering, "Hist! Another loud word, and I will kill you! Speak by signs, and point out the place where the entrance is."

"They will murder me!" gasped the boy.

"You will be dead long before they can reach you, for I will kill you *now*," replied the officer, cocking his revolver, and putting the muzzle against the boy's head. The click of the lock, and the cold touch of the steel, acted like an electric shock: he fell on his knees, crying, "Oh, don't kill me! Don't kill me!"

"Then point out the entrance," said the officer, with such a fierce look, that the boy felt that his last hour had come, unless he obeyed. He rose, and staggered towards the rock which Mr. Norman had struck, the officer holding him by the neck, and still keeping the cocked revolver so as to touch his face. He put one foot on the turf covering the ground close to the ledge, as if feeling for something. Having found what he sought, he placed the other foot on a slight mound of turf; and the moment the weight of his body rested wholly on it, to the astonishment of every one, the

huge, projecting rock that stood on the iron frame slowly moved aside, and displayed the wide entrance to the cave.

"I knew it was here," exclaimed Mr. Norman in triumph. The orders had already been given regarding the attack within the cave. Mr. Norman and the officer were to lead, revolvers in hand: all the men were to follow, similarly armed, their carbines, too bulky for such hand-to-hand fighting, strapped over their shoulders. When through the long, dark passage, at a signal from their leaders, they were to spring into the several grottos, which by that time would be light enough, and each two seize their man before he had time to resist. A sergeant, with four or five men, was left to guard the entrance, and to arrest or shoot down any one attempting to escape. The officer left the shepherd-boy in charge of these men, with orders to liberate him before they brought out their prisoners; for they knew that it would be certain death to him, if the brigands, or any of their adherents, should learn that he had even an unwilling hand in their betrayal. This being settled, they silently and cautiously entered the

grotto, whose soft turf floor deadened the sound of their feet, Mr. Norman using the dark-lantern carefully, so as to throw no light before him, but merely now and then showing the well-worn path to the interior of the cave.[1]

[1] That the means employed by Mr. Norman to trace the hiding-place of the brigands may not appear exaggerated, the author will relate the following occurrence, which suggested to him this part of the plot: —

During the revolution of 1848 in Sicily, when all the prisons had been opened, and their inmates let loose, Mr. John Barlow, an Englishman, member of the firm of Woodhouse & Co., the famous manufacturers of Marsala wine and consular agent of the United States at Marsala, going from one estate to another, about seven miles from the city was captured by masked men, blindfolded, made to walk about in various directions for a mile or more, and then shut up in a dark room of some cottage or farmhouse. There they forced him, under threats, to write an order for a ransom of many thousands of dollars, which was paid the same night; and the next day he was released, with similar precautions, at a different place from where he had been captured. Mr. Barlow, having, by chance, a pencil and compass among some charms on his watch-chain, used the means described in the text to trace his course. For further evidence, he had written in his order to Woodhouse & Co., "*marked* silver dollars," which they understood, and, before payment, employed the whole clerical force in their counting-room to *mark* the silver dollars, the usual currency of those days. The very next day after his release, Mr. Barlow went out with a strong police force, and, by means of his compass and the distances he had noted down, traced his way to a farmhouse, and to the very room in which he had been confined. The inmates were arrested; a part of the money found, and recognized by the mark made in one of the letters of the coins; and eventually, by means of the mark, the other parties implicated in the crime were also arrested and convicted.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NIGHT AMONG THE BRIGANDS.

EDITH, after her first attempt to scream for help, had sunk to the bottom of the carriage, as it dashed along, overcome with terror and distress, knowing well the hopelessness of resistance. The mention of her *innamorato* by the two women had, in a measure, re-assured her, proving that no personal violence was intended. But what had become of her father? Had he been taken captive by the other members of the band? She had not been able to see what took place after she was dragged from his arms, and driven off at such a rapid pace. It was the first time in her life that she had been separated from him, and under what circumstances, — she in the hands of criminals! for, kind as the two women were to her, they were mere tools in the hands of their savage and lawless husbands. The word "*innamorato*"

still rang in her ears; and, though she felt that Silvio could never have had any hand in such an outrage, yet his own father was the principal author of it, and for what purpose? "Does Leone expect to compel me to marry his son by force? Or, because I refused to marry him, does he avenge himself by exacting some large ransom for me from my father?" Her thoughts wandered in fear and doubt; and tears often filled her eyes, while the two women tried to console her with assurances of kind treatment.

In the afternoon they arrived at the foot of the Sonnino mountain, though on the opposite slope from the village, and, having obtained a donkey for Edith, began the ascent. When they reached a certain elevation, they blindfolded her, as before, and did not remove the bandage until they were in the cave. Marcia and Clelia improvised a sort of private room for her under the direction of Leone himself, who, when Edith was brought in, had welcomed her most courteously. "Now, my dear young lady, once here again, you are as safe as in your father's house; and, before long, you will be happy with Silvio."

At the mention of her father, poor Edith burst into tears.

"Oh, my poor father! What has become of him? Is he taken also? Oh, how anxious he must be about me!"

"Fear not, dear lady: he is probably in Rome again by this time; and you will rejoin him as soon as we have come to terms."

"But what do you mean to do with me?"

"Why, marry you to Silvio, whom you love," replied Leone, anxious to cheer her up. "But hush, hush! we will talk of this by and by. You must be tired and hungry: so you had better rest and dine first, and then we will have a long talk about it."

Edith compelled herself to sit down quietly, while he continued to direct the arrangement of her quarters for the night, which was fast approaching. They fastened rope-lines across the grotto, enclosing the large opening which commanded such a beautiful view of the slope of the mountain, and, by hangings of shawls and blankets, separated it from the rest of the large cave. They brought in Leone's low camp-bed, making it up with clean linen sheets and

blankets, and over all a coverlet of fleecy sheepskins. Above this, Leone, with his own hands, hung the picture of Silvio's mother, saying, "It will be as good as a Madonna to protect your sleep; and at the same time it will remind you of Silvio. Is he not her very image?" and he called her attention to it. Edith watched it for a long time; and her fears and apprehensions gradually subsided, as she noticed how Leone's stern, fierce expression melted into sadness and softness as he gazed upon it. As it grew dark, they brought in lamps, and a simple but well-cooked dinner, to which Leone, with a refinement of politeness she had not ventured to expect, left her alone. She was now sufficiently tranquillized to eat with something of a relish, while she listened to the preparations made for the dinner of the band, who kept arriving by twos and threes, talking over the events of the day. After she had finished her repast, Leone came again, and quietly seated himself at the table opposite her for their promised conference.

"My dear young lady, to you this must seem very harsh treatment; but I had no alternative:

your father was so obstinate, he would not listen to reason."

"My father!" exclaimed Edith with surprise.

"Yes, your father. I had a long conversation with him yesterday, and endeavored to persuade him to delay his departure from Italy. I told him that events might take place before long that would make him alter his determination, and allow you to marry Silvio; but he would listen to nothing. He insulted me as no other man would have dared insult Leone: he even refused to let me speak with you, as I wished, hoping to be able to make you feel differently towards me. I had no resource left, therefore, but to act as I have done, to insure Silvio's happiness, and your own too, for I know you love him."

Edith was much surprised that her father had said nothing to her of all this: it was the first time that he had ever kept any thing from her, but she felt that he had done it to save her anxiety.

"My father did it in kindness to me. What good would it have done? Our decision once made, it was better to leave Italy."

"*Your* decision? Did you not break off your engagement in obedience to your father's wishes?"

"No: my father never said a word to me, not even of advice. I did it from my own sense of what was right. He approved of it, and so did Silvio."

Leone fixed his piercing eyes on her with an astonished look; then he asked gently, —

"You loved Silvio?"

"Yes, with all my heart. I love him now," replied Edith with deep feeling; "but I will never marry" — She hesitated, not daring to finish the sentence, and almost wondering how she had been bold enough to say so much. But Leone, shaking his head with a melancholy expression, finished it for her, —

"The son of a brigand! Your love must be different from that of us Italians. An Italian woman, if she loved, would be blind to all such considerations. But be it as it may, if I am the only obstacle, I will repeat to you what I said to your father. I have no legal claim over Silvio: he is, in law, the ward of Father Francesco, and Silvio di Montalba by Papal dispen-

sation. Marry him, and leave Italy. Go to France, to America: nobody will know that he is related to me. I will not come near you, if you wish: it is sufficient for me to know that the son of my Silvia is happy. In after years, when I have redeemed my name, you may come to think better of Leone: you may even have some affection for him. Silvio surely will, for the sake of his mother," he continued, fixing his eyes on the portrait that hung opposite; "for she loved me. Oh, how she loved me! Look at her: do not her eyes speak love?"

Edith turned to look at the portrait; and, in the dim light thrown by the oil-lamps through the darkness of the grotto, the face of Silvia stood out, her eyes sparkling with a tender, life-like lustre. She watched it earnestly for a while, for it was Silvio's face, then turned slowly to Leone again, and saw that he was absorbed in gazing at it. She caught for the first time that repentant, sorrowful look she had so often noticed in Silvio's St. Jerome, her artist's eye recognizing at once that he had been the model for it. Long she remained silent, studying that striking, lion-like face,

hitherto a source of dread to her, now so completely changed as to inspire pity rather than fear. Her past terror at the presence of this fierce man gradually died away; and she gently addressed him in sweet, pleading accents, —

"Leone, I have no ill feeling against you. I have no doubt that you acted as you did, supposing that I was forced by my father to break off my engagement. But it was not so: it was my own doing. Now that you know that, you will restore me to my father to-morrow. Poor father! How dreadfully he must be feeling!" and tears came to her eyes. She continued earnestly, "You will do this for Silvio's sake; for I know he would never have consented to such violence; for his mother's sake" —

"Hush, hush!" interrupted Leone, but with a gentle, coaxing expression. "I have sent for Silvio, and he will be here to-morrow. When I have convinced him, he will persuade you: you will consent to marry him."

"No, Leone, that will never be."

"Oh, yes, it will! yes, it will!" reiterated Leone with a persuasive smile, as if sure of what he said. "If all other arguments fail, I

will say a word in your ear — but to you only — that will make you change your mind."

He said this without the least indication of a threat, but kindly, almost affectionately, like one who has a joyful surprise in store; and so Edith understood it, thinking, in some wonder, what could it be? But Leone rose to end the conversation: he took her hand in his, for she dared not refuse it, and said, —

"Good-night, dear lady; and have no fear: you are as safe here as in your father's arms. If you wish for any thing, Marcia and Clelia are outside to wait upon you, and I shall be within hearing. No one can disturb you; and Silvio's mother is watching over you like a Madonna" (and again he gave a longing look at the portrait), "and that will make you think of Silvio, and dream of him. Good-night." And, kissing her hand with the gallantry of youth, he left her alone, carefully arranging the hangings with his own hands, so as to isolate her completely from the rest.

Edith looked around the strange place in which she was left alone. The conversation with Leone had made a deep impression on her

mind. Her fears had almost entirely vanished; but, in like measure, her wonder had increased. Who was this formidable man, who could be as fierce as a lion, and yet as gentle as a dove? It occurred to her, that, though he called Silvio his son, and Silvia the woman he loved, yet he had never said, "My wife!" What mystery was hidden under it? What did his last words of encouragement imply? What could he say, that would make her alter her resolution? These and similar thoughts pressed upon her mind; and she sat long at the table, hearing the distant talk and laughter of the men and women, who seemed to be carousing in some of the farther grottos. Little by little these sounds died away, and every thing was still. She had resolved at first not to lie down; but the night air, coming in from the large opening through which she could see the bright stars of a clear Italian autumn night, made her shiver with cold, though she was in warm travelling-dress. So, leaving only one light burning, she lay down, dressed as she was, on the cot, covering herself with the heavy sheep-skin, that in a few moments warmed her thoroughly. She

did not mean to go to sleep: a lingering apprehension of the place she was in, and the people by whom she was surrounded, still hung about her; and she lay a long time tracing the strange shadows cast by the dim light on the damp rocks above her head, and watching the prismatic glitter of their rough surfaces. Then she looked at the portrait of Silvio's mother; and that brought before her mind, as in a panorama, the successive strange events that had taken place, first distinctly, then confusedly, till tired nature could resist no longer; and, in spite of her resolution, she fell fast asleep. Exhausted by the fatigue and excitement of the day before, she slept soundly for many hours, but woke up with a sudden start, and, remembering her determination to keep awake, supposed at first that she had only dozed a while. But she felt quite rested; and a glimmer of light that reached her through the opening of the cave satisfied her that dawn was approaching. Fully resolved not to sleep again, she opened her eyes wide, and almost unconsciously resumed the line of thought of the evening before. Every thing was silent

about her: not a sound, not a murmur, save the heavy breathing of the men asleep in the different caves, and now and then the low, plaintive twitter of some Alpine bird awakening to the approaching morn. Suddenly, but distinctly, in the deep silence, she heard through the aperture a distant voice, crying, "Stop! Stop that boy!" The words were in Italian; but the voice and accent were unmistakably her father's. She started, raised herself to a sitting posture, gasping mentally, "My father!" and held her breath, anxiously listening. Not a sound, not a whisper: every thing was as still as before. She remained a long time in strained suspense, but finally sank again upon her couch, saying to herself, "It must have been my imagination." Daylight was already beginning to appear. She closed her eyes to concentrate her thoughts, and had almost lost herself again, when she was suddenly startled by a powerful voice near by, shouting the military "Avanti!" repeated by another, which she instantly recognized as her father's, followed by the trampling of many feet, the screams of women, and mingled cries of "Surrender, sur-

render!" and "Treachery, treachery! We are betrayed!" Her first impulse was to crouch in terror under her sheep-skins; but her father's voice roused her courage, and, springing from the cot, she rushed across the grotto, and hastily tore down some of the hangings. The cave was filled with armed men rushing about, pistol in hand, securing the half-dressed brigands, who, surprised in their sleep, struggled to regain their weapons that lay scattered about, but in vain, for each one was surrounded by two or three soldiers who overpowered and held him down. Mr. Norman, on entering, had hurried first to where Leone's bed had been; but, not finding it in its place, was about turning in search of him, when Leone, who had lain down on some mats on the opposite side, under the picture of St. Nicholas, snatched a long dagger from the group of weapons hanging beside it, and rushed upon him. It would have been Mr. Norman's last day on earth, had not Edith, with a bound, thrown herself in Leone's way, and, clinging to his knees, cried out, "Oh, don't kill my father! Don't kill my father!" At the same moment the officer and another

soldier, coming up behind, seized Leone by the arms, and, holding their revolvers at his head, exclaimed, "Surrender!" Leone let fall his weapon, looked down compassionately at the kneeling girl, and then at her father, who, with an involuntary feeling of compunction, stood facing him. He said, "You owe your life to your blessed child." Then turning to the officer with a dignified air, as though he were the general of an army, he said, "I am your prisoner." Edith tottered to her feet only to fall senseless into the arms of her father, who tenderly carried her to the couch from which she had sprung only a few moments before.

The action took less time than we have spent in narrating it. The banditti felt so secure in their hiding-place, that they took very few precautions against attack. Wary as they were in their distant depredations, they felt perfectly easy and at home in their cave at Castellaccio. Leone never allowed any aggressions in the neighborhood that might bring suspicions on the locality, and throughout his long career had heavily bribed both higher and lower officials, so that they had an interest in

keeping him from harm. The whole peasant population of Sonnino were his friends and *manutengoli*. The shepherds on the mountain were in his pay, and were prompt to warn the band of any approach by suspicious persons. The entrance to the cave was so constructed as to deceive the most acute observer, and nothing but the treachery of the few who knew the secret could have revealed its position and mode of opening; so that, when once within it, and the door closed, they feared no assault. The ascent to it also was so steep and winding in its single path, that, if timely warned, as they were sure to be, by the shepherds or people of Sonnino, if they saw any unusual movement of troops, they could defend themselves for days against a whole regiment, and, on some dark night, slip away by the many precipitous paths known only to themselves, and escape, even if the mountain were surrounded by an army. For this reason, when they had all returned the evening before, tired out with their fatiguing expedition, they had supped abundantly, and in joyful expectation of the good ransom they were to get from the rich

foreigner, — which Leone had intended to give them out of his own purse, — and gone securely to the sleep from which they were so suddenly waked to find themselves prisoners before they could oppose any resistance to the unexpected assault.

Valerio had been most active, and displayed more courage, a great deal, than people in general would have given him credit for. He was a peaceful, quiet youth, and would never have gone into danger by his own choice; but once fairly in it, and convinced that the least that could happen to him was a bullet through his head, he had braced himself up, and resolved to sell his life dear: so he rushed into the *melée* with reckless desperation. It is an acknowledged fact that such peaceable men, who seem to dread the idea of danger, if once thoroughly roused, behave as well as, if not better than, veteran fighters, because of their ignorance of danger. Valerio had followed close at Mr. Norman's heels, and, at the pre-arranged signal of "Avanti!" dashed into the cave, and threw himself upon a sleeping figure at the opposite side, crying, "Surrender, surrender!" The

man, awakened from heavy sleep, opened his eyes to see a revolver held close to his head. It was Maso. Valerio recognized him at once, and cried, "Aha, my witty lawyer! I have got *you* this time!" Maso, collecting his scattered wits, made a motion as if to spring at him, but was held down by a soldier, while Valerio threatened, "Don't stir, or I will fire!" Maso subsided, and, seeing Pietraccio near in the grasp of two soldiers, said, "This is treachery, and *he* has done it, as I warned you he would," nodding at Leone, who, sunk in gloomy thought, sat guarded by a sergeant and two other men, at the table where, the night before, he had conversed with Edith. Pietraccio, for only answer, gave a savage growl, like a hyena stirred up in his cage. In a few moments all the prisoners were securely bound, with the exception of Leone, who, at Mr. Norman's especial request, was allowed to remain loose, under a strong guard.

For some time Edith lay unconscious on the bed, anxiously watched by her father, who sprinkled her face with water, and did all he could to restore her. When she came to her-

self again, she thought at first that she had had a fearful dream; but, seeing her father's face bending over her in great distress, the whole came vividly before her mind, and she threw her arms around his neck, crying, "O father, father! *You* are not hurt? I knew you would come to my rescue. I knew you were coming: I heard your voice! Dear, dear father!" Mr. Norman thought she was wandering, and replied soothingly, "I am not hurt. Be calm, be calm, my poor child. You are safe, quite safe."

At this point, Valerio and the officer, having seen all the prisoners properly secured, came up to them. Edith, at sight of Valerio, was gratefully surprised, understanding readily that he must have volunteered to run such a great risk, to help release her. She offered him her hand, saying, "You also came to my rescue? How generous of you!"

"What would I not do for you, my faithful pupil?" replied Valerio with his customary gallantry, thinking as usual to himself, "Oh, if she had only fallen in love with me!" But this thought was suddenly checked by her next words.

"And Silvio? Is he also with you?"

"Oh, no!" replied Mr. Norman. "He knows nothing at all about it. We managed it all among ourselves, with the assistance of the American consul and the governor of Rome."

Leone, who sat leaning on the table near them, hearing the conversation, lifted his head at these words, exclaiming, "The governor of Rome, did you say?"

Before her father could reply, Edith turned, and, seeing Leone seated at the table where he had been the evening before, all the gentleness and kindness with which he had treated her came back to her mind. Acting under a generous impulse, she rose from the cot where she had been sitting, and ran to him, crying with real distress, "O Leone, Leone! — What will they do to him, father? Will they kill him?"

In his excitement and eagerness for his daughter's rescue, this thought had never occurred to Mr. Norman; but now the idea shocked him, for, after all, Leone was the father of Silvio. Mr. Norman felt really

grieved; and, in the nobleness of his nature, he forgot the brigand, and only saw before him a vanquished enemy. He stretched out his hand to him, saying, "Leone, I am very sorry for you, but you forced me to it by your violent action. I will exert all the influence that I can bring to bear upon the Papal Government in your behalf."

Had any one told him, a week before, that he, Edward Norman, the high-minded American citizen, whose respect for law and justice was supreme, and moral sense of duty beyond all possible doubt, would deliberately walk up to a notorious robber and outlaw, shake hands with him, and express regret that he had been chiefly instrumental in his capture, and promise to do all in his power to mitigate his sentence, he would have resented it as an insult. But such is the power of sentiment over reason; and who shall say that sentiment is not often in the right?

Leone looked first with intense feeling at the lovely face of Edith, which expressed such distress and sorrow at his impending fate, then exchanged a friendly look with Mr. Norman,

who still held his hand, and glancing at the officer, who, at a little distance, watched the scene with surprise, he whispered to them, so as not to be overheard, "Fear not for me. It will be all right as soon as they take me to Rome."

Having secured all the prisoners, the officer ordered an immediate departure for Sonnino, leaving a small detachment to guard the place, and take charge of the effects, until further orders. Mr. Norman, Edith, and Valerio went first, accompanied by the officer and one or two men: the others followed a short distance after. As Valerio was about leaving the place, he noticed Silvio's portrait of his mother still hanging over the bed. He said to himself, "I cannot leave this here." So he took it down, and, with the assistance of some of the soldiers, carried it away.

It was only a little after sunrise when they emerged from the cave in advance of the prisoners. The officer immediately ordered the liberation of the shepherd, who disappeared among the crags of the mountain; and they took their way down, followed at a little dis-

tance by the long line of soldiers and prisoners. Leone marched ahead in stern silence, under guard, but unbound, the officer having accepted his word that he would not attempt to escape.

CHAPTER XX.

THE VENDETTA.

THE evening before the events narrated in the last chapter, Silvio received a message from Leone, asking him to come up alone, next morning at dawn, to the mountain chapel, where he would find a guide to lead him to the Castellaccio, and begging him not to fail, as he had prepared for him an unexpected but grateful surprise. He wondered a little at the summons, and naturally went to Father Francesco to ask his advice.

"Leone has acted very strangely of late," said the good father, reading the message. "What does he mean by asking you to meet him in his hiding-place? Does he forget that it is a criminal offence against the laws? Such an act, however innocent on your part, would implicate you, by the laws against brigandage." And the kind monk lifted his hands in horror

at the idea. "No, Silvio, you must not go. I forbid you to do so. I am your legal guardian, and he has no right to ask of you what may do you harm. I was and am willing that you, as a dutiful son, should exert all your powers to redeem him from the life he is leading, but not to the extent of endangering your own life and reputation."

Silvio respectfully suggested, "But, Father Francesco, remember, he is my father."

"He has forfeited that claim by his criminal life, and I forbid you to go."

Never had Father Francesco spoken so severely to Silvio: he bowed his head submissively, saying, "I will do as you wish." Father Francesco resumed his naturally mild tone, adding, "I will send a trusty messenger, tomorrow at dawn, to tell him, if he has any thing to communicate, to come to us here. It is here that we must work to effect his conversion, for which I will exert all the power of my holy office, and you your filial duty."

Silvio returned to his cell deeply affected. What could Leone want of him, to summon him so urgently to that dangerous place? As

he paced up and down, his eyes fell upon a letter lying on the table. It was from Valerio, announcing the approaching departure of Edith.

"Gone, gone! Lost forever!" he exclaimed in the anguish of his heart, sinking upon his chair, and burying his face in his hands. Long he sat there, and his old idea of entering the monastic life returned more forcibly than ever. "What is life worth to me now?" he thought. "Yet if not to myself, I can be of some use to my fellow-creatures, to my poor father especially. I could influence him more as a monk than as I am at present. I am now fully resolved. To-morrow I will insist upon Father Francesco admitting me to the novitiate." He little knew what the morrow was to bring forth!

At sunrise next day, one of the farmers attached to the estates of the convent started from Sonnino to carry Father Francesco's message to Leone. As he left the village, an extraordinary sight presented itself. Companies of regular troops occupied every egress from the place, their lines stretching upwards

toward the Castellaccio. He still advanced; but, when he reached within hailing distance, he was peremptorily ordered to go back, as no one was allowed to go from the village for the time being. Similar orders were given to every one who attempted to leave the place. There was a full regiment, and the town was completely surrounded.

The man returned to the convent, and reported the fact to Father Francesco. He had heard, though he had not thought it well to tell Silvio, of the bold robbery of the treasury chests a few days previous, and easily understood that the government had been roused to put forth its best efforts to arrest Leone and his band. "He deserves it!" he thought to himself. "Justice and law must claim their due! Indeed, the government has been too slack, and allowed them too long to hold sway over the country. I hope it will succeed in arresting them, and will free the Campania from the lawless men who have infested it for so many years. It is just! It is just! But Silvio must not hear of it, poor boy, he would be so concerned for his father's safety." He

resolved, accordingly, to keep the youth occupied, so that he should not leave the convent, and, going into his cell, asked him to join the monks at Matins. Silvio, thinking that Father Francesco had come to the same conclusion as himself in regard to his joining the brotherhood, and had therefore come to initiate him into the monastic routine, readily consented, and accompanied him to the chapel to attend the service. After prayers they went into the refectory for their morning meal, where Silvio usually sat on the inner curve of the semi-circular table, opposite Father Francesco. Before they were half through breakfast, they were interrupted by Valerio, who, without asking leave, burst into the refectory, screaming out in the most excited manner, —

"We have got them! We have got them — the whole brood, men and women — without firing a gun, or losing a life! We did it, — Mr. Norman and I — and released Miss Edith! Ah! These Americani are smart people, wonderful people!" Here he ran up to Silvio, and clasped him in a fervent embrace; then, seeing a glass of wine upon the table, he emptied it at a draught, saying, "Oh, I am so thirsty!"

The astonishment of the by-standers can be easily imagined. They left the breakfast-table, and crowded around Valerio, asking questions, especially Silvio and Father Francesco. "What! The brigands taken! and Leone too? Mr. Norman! His daughter! How came they here? Did they not leave Rome?"

Valerio tried to answer; but he was so excited, that he could not explain, except in broken sentences. "Yes: they started to go to Naples, but were attacked in the road, and captured — No, they only took the daughter — Mr. Norman came back to Rome — We went to the American consul — to the governor of Rome — got troops — he made a map — surprised them in the Castellaccio — got them all safe without firing a gun — Here they all are in the square — Antonio — no, Leone — with them — Mr. Norman — Miss Edith — all. Come, come and see!"

And he seized Silvio, and dragged him along the corridor to a balcony that looked out upon the square in front of the convent, Father Francesco and the rest of the monks following. It was full of soldiers; for, as the prisoners

were brought in, the troops that had surrounded the village closed in around them, keeping off the populace, that from every house and shop came thronging about with curiosity and fear. When they reached the open place in front of the convent, they formed into a hollow square, keeping the prisoners in the middle, so as not to allow any communication with the people.

Mr. Norman and Edith had gone into the Foresteria, and were now standing on the balcony overlooking the scene. As they exchanged salutations, Father Francesco proposed going over at once to congratulate them upon their miraculous escape from so many dangers, and comfort the young lady after the excitement and terror of her capture. They went down into the street; and as they made their way slowly through the crowd of people that gathered round the hollow square of soldiers, who with fixed bayonets kept them off, they noticed many weeping eyes among the women, who probably had husbands, lovers, or relatives among the arrested brigands, and threatening looks among the men, who, had they not been overawed by superior force, would have at-

tempted a rescue. The troops allowed Valerio and his friends to pass within the lines; and they went up to Leone, who stood with his arms folded, proudly surveying the scene, in strong contrast to the dejected demeanor of his companions. Father Francesco addressed him kindly, though with somewhat untimely reproaches.

"Incorrigible man! How many times have I warned you that this would be the end? You would not listen to the voice of our Lord, speaking through his unworthy servant; and this is the inevitable result."

"This is no fit time for sermonizing, Father Francesco: wait for a better opportunity," replied Leone somewhat impatiently, and turned towards Silvio, who had come close to him, and pressed his hand affectionately, whispering with deep feeling, "My poor father!"

Leone answered in a low tone, but with a loving smile, "Fear not for me, Silvio: I have been in worse dangers than this. I have such influence in high quarters that they will not keep me long in confinement. I am too dangerous." Then, addressing the three, he said,

"Now, go up to the Foresteria, and tell Mr. Norman that I bear no ill will against him. In his place, I would have done the same."

They went across to the Foresteria. Edith was shocked at the sight of Silvio, for he was but the shadow of his former self. The intense suffering of the past few days, unrelieved by any distraction, had told heavily upon his sensitive, passionate nature: he was pale, emaciated, with hollow, black rings around his eyes. They greeted each other with the deep feeling of those who had parted from their dearest, never expecting to meet again: clasping hands, they looked at each other in silence, unable to utter a word.

Mr. Norman, however, received Father Francesco with his usual buoyant spirits. He was proud of his achievement (and well he might be), though he regretted that the chief culprit should be so nearly related to the young man he so dearly loved; but it could not be helped. "Dear Father Francesco," he said, "I have accomplished something for which the Pope will thank me; and I have also given a lesson to the government, showing, that, with energy

and determination, they could soon eradicate this plague of brigandage from Italy." He then began to relate the exciting events of the previous day; but Valerio was so full of it, that he would not allow Mr. Norman to proceed, but, taking the words out of his mouth, went on in his voluble way, giving every little detail, from the time that Mr. Norman, as he expressed it, fell like a bombshell into his studio, to the final successful surprise and arrest of the brigands, concluding, "And I have brought off a trophy of our victory. Mr. Norman rescued his daughter, and I rescued your mother, Silvio." And he went for the portrait, which he had left in an outer room, and placed it on a table opposite a bed that stood in a corner. Hardly had he removed the veil that covered it, and arranged the table so as to have it in a good light, when they were startled by confused outcries from the square, a rolling of drums and clatter of arms among the soldiers, with voices from the populace crying, "He is killed! He is dead! They have killed him!" They rushed to the balcony, and a shocking sight presented itself. From the

centre of the hollow square, where the brigands were angrily crying, "Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!" a party of soldiers were bringing the senseless body of Leone towards the Foresteria, while others were holding Pietraccio, who seemed to have got loose. What had happened?

When Father Francesco, Silvio, and Valerio, coming from the convent, had been allowed to stop and speak to Leone, Maso and Pietraccio stood only a few steps from them, and heard all the conversation, even when he whispered to Silvio not to fear for him, as he had influence in high quarters. They moved away a few steps; and Maso began, "Are you satisfied now? He has protection in high quarters, and will get clear. It is we who will be hung."

Pietraccio gave a suppressed growl, but with canine fidelity replied, "No! I cannot believe that of him. He must have been betrayed himself; and, if he can save himself, he will save us too. He has done it before."

"You will not believe it until you are on the gallows," replied Maso cynically. "Why is he allowed to go loose, while they have bound all the rest of us, like oxen to be slaughtered?

Why do they allow him to converse with his friends, while they keep ours away at the point of the bayonet?"

"I do not care for that: that is no proof that he betrayed us. I must have better proof than that, before I believe that Capt. Leone would betray us," reiterated Pietraccio.

"More proofs! Well, you will find them when you are no longer able to avenge yourself. Even now, what could you do, if you had ever so much proof? We are bound, and watched by troops all around us."

For only answer, Pietraccio rolled his eyes, grinding his teeth with such force, that he broke the edge of one, and spit it out with venomous rage, his breast heaving, and his mouth foaming, with a hiss like a wildcat.

The conversation was interrupted by a call to arms, and a military salute to an officer of high rank, who, followed by his aids, entered the enclosure. It was the chief of police, who had directed the movement. He wore the undress uniform of a general of *gens-d'armes*, and walked slowly up to the prisoners, inspecting them one by one, questioning them, and occa-

sionally referring to a note-book which he held in his hand. Leone, who had seated himself astride a chair which had been brought out from the *café*, watched him with a sarcastic smile. When he came to Maso and Pietraccio, he referred to his book, and said, "You are the second in command of the band. — And you, the special attendant of Leone, are you not?"

Pietraccio shrugged his shoulders angrily, without replying; but Maso, who never lost an opportunity of using his tongue, said with rather an impudent air, "Yes, general; and we claim the right to be treated like our leader, and to be left unbound. With a regiment of soldiers guarding us, there is no danger that we shall attempt to escape. And we also take the liberty of informing you that we have had nothing to eat this morning."

The chief of police looked sharply, first at Maso, then at Pietraccio, and replied with an authoritative air, "You ask too much for a man in your position. You will have something to eat presently, in the cloister of the convent, before setting out for Rome. As to going unbound, that is against the regulations,

though I may relax the rule while you eat. Leone has been excepted, for reasons satisfactory to myself." He said this last sentence slowly, watching keenly the effect it produced on the listeners. He noticed Maso exchange a quick glance with Pietraccio, and saw the latter turn livid with suppressed rage. He called the officers who had the prisoners in charge, asking, "Have all these men been disarmed?" and, on their replying in the affirmative, he said in a loud voice, so as to be heard by all, "Then I see no reason why the prisoners may not be unbound while they are eating their breakfast in the cloister. Afterwards, on the march to Rome, you will have them again securely bound, with the exception of Leone. There is no need of it in his case."

A meaning glance was interchanged, at this last emphatic sentence, between Maso, Pietraccio, and the other members of the band, — a glance of intelligence, surprise, and anger; but they were still further surprised and enraged, when they saw the chief of police walk up to Leone with a pleasant smile of greeting, saying, "Ah! We have you at last, Signor Leone

di Montalba: you have been running at large too long."

Leone looked up, without deigning to rise from his chair, and said with a sardonic smile, "Is this your work?"

"Yes, yes," replied the chief. Then, lowering his head, he spoke low, "What could we do? Why did you capture a woman, and a foreigner? You knew it would raise all the foreign governments against us."

"I see. I made a mistake,—the first one in my life," replied Leone. "And what do you mean to do now?" he asked, after a pause.

The chief looked round to see that none of his officers were within hearing, then said with a significant smile, "We will manage all that when we get to Rome." He even went so far as to shake hands rather ostentatiously with Leone, watching, the while, the effect on the other brigands; and, as if satisfied with his success, he left him, somewhat astonished at this too open exhibition of friendliness.

Hardly had he left Leone's side, when Pietraccio, who, with the others, had been unbound, grasping a stiletto which he had concealed,

sprang upon Leone, who was still seated with his back to him, and struck him a powerful blow between his shoulders, crying, "Traitor!" Leone fell back, uttering a groan. The officers, taken by surprise, and fearing an *émeute*, called to arms. The chief of police ordered the brigands to be rebound, and carried into the convent cloister. As they passed the prostrate body of Leone, they cried out with curses, "Traitor! Traitor!" The surgeon of the regiment was hastily summoned, and examined the wound. The stiletto had penetrated deep into the chest, and it was bleeding internally. He shook his head ominously, and ordered the immediate removal of the wounded man to some convenient place. The Foresteria was near at hand: so they carried him there, and laid him on the bed, in the room where our friends were assembled, horror-struck at the dreadful occurrence. The surgeon then examined the wound more carefully, probed it, and, turning to Father Francesco, who stood by the bed in painful suspense, he said, "The wound is mortal: there is no hope for him. You may have just time enough to give him the last religious assist-

ance. Mine is no longer of any use." And he turned to go. On the threshold he met the chief of police, who asked him eagerly, —

"Is he dead?"

"No; but it is only a question of an hour or two."

"Then we can leave him in the hands of the monks, so that he may end well." This he said with a sanctimonious air, but with a feeling of relief which he could hardly conceal. He requested Father Francesco to attend to his religious needs; and ordering a guard to watch the entrance of the house, so as to keep off intruders, he left the place with light steps, to attend to the transportation of the band, for whose arrest he expected to get all the credit.

Father Francesco stood at the head of the bed, piously watching every motion of the patient, with the hope, that, in some lucid interval, he might minister his holy office *in articulo mortis*. From time to time, he lifted his hands in prayer, "Lord, have mercy upon him! Lord, have mercy upon him!" Silvio, utterly overwhelmed, knelt at one side of the bed, holding Leone's hand; for, brigand though

he had been, he was still his father. Like a ministering angel, Edith stood on the other side, wiping the dew from his cold forehead, no particle of resentment left in her generous heart for his violence, but remembering only his kindness the evening before. Mr. Norman stood by her, administering spoonfuls of brandy. Valerio went in and out, carrying messages for Father Francesco. He had sent for some of the monks, who brought processionally the Holy Sacrament of the Communion and the Extreme Unction, and waited in an anteroom, ready to administer these last offices, if he revived and confessed; but he admitted only those four into the chamber of death.

Long, very long, did Leone lie unconscious, carefully watched, and tenderly cared for. Edith, anxious and exhausted, sat down by the bed, expecting every moment that he would breathe his last. Finally, as Mr. Norman gave him another spoonful of the brandy, he languidly opened his eyes; and they fell upon the portrait that Valerio had placed upon the table opposite. He gave a start, exclaiming with difficulty, "Silvia, Silvia!" Silvio, who still

knelt beside him, pressing his hand, could no longer control his feelings: he cried in a tone of anguish, "Father, dear father!"

That voice, that word, startled the dying man. He turned his eyes from the picture to Silvio; a nervous paroxysm shook his frame; he half rose in the bed, exclaiming in a trembling voice, —

"Father! No, no, no! The murderer of your father!" And he fell back fainting in Father Francesco's arms.

Edith was so horrified that she could not move; but watching that dying face, which in that supreme moment looked more impressive than ever, she exclaimed with great agitation, "He is dead! He is dead! He is not Silvio's father!" And, bursting into tears, she buried her head in the pillow.

Who can describe the amazement of Silvio at this revelation? He rose to his feet, dropping the hand which he had been holding, and cried with an accent of acutest distress, "Not his son? Who, then, am I?"

Father Francesco, the only one who had remained calm during this exciting scene, placed

his hand over Leone's heart; and, feeling that it still beat, he said, —

"My children, he is not dead; and I may yet hear his confession. Withdraw into the next room, and leave me alone with him."

They were about to obey; but Leone, who had not entirely lost his consciousness, gathering up his strength, said with a weak voice (for the hemorrhage was slowly doing its work), "No, no! Let them stay — Let them hear it too — I will have no secrets from them."

Father Francesco, yielding to his wish, beckoned them to remain. Edith resumed her seat by the bed, leaning her head against it: the others gathered round with anxious expectation, and Father Francesco said, —

"Leone, what you reveal to us now, I will accept as a confession; and, if you truly repent, God will also accept it, and give you his forgiveness. Remember, you have only a few moments to live; and your eternal safety depends upon your truly confessing and repenting your sins." He made the sign of the cross, and then asked him, —

"You are not, then, the father of Silvio?"

Leone had again fixed his eyes on the portrait: now he looked at Silvio, who stood trembling with suspense and dread at his side, and, seizing his hand, implored, —

"Promise to forgive me! Promise! I will not confess unless you promise me that."

Silvio was unable to speak; but Father Francesco, perceiving it, said, "Yes, Leone, I promise in his name. Speak, for your time is short."

"Yes: I feel it. I am dying — and by a dagger!" he gasped. Mr. Norman hastily gave him some more brandy, which revived him somewhat; and he resumed with broken sentences, fixing his eyes on the portrait, "I loved her: yes, how I loved her! She belonged to another branch of the family, Silvia di Montalba, — the wealthy Montalbas of the Abruzzi. We were engaged, but were yet very young. They sent me to travel in Italy and France — to see the world before marrying. While I was away, the Duke of Celata fell in love with Silvia. She refused him, and he swore to make her his at any cost. He was a member of the society of the Carbonari for the liberation of Italy. He knew I also belonged to it — traitor — He

turned State's evidence, and accused me and others. On my return to the Abruzzi, I was arrested, convicted, and condemned to the galleys for life — My property was confiscated — He, the traitor, meanwhile, made proposals of marriage to Silvia's father, who, for the sake of his title and large fortune, compelled her to marry him in spite of her repeated refusals. I learned this while I was working in the chain-gang, blasting rocks, like a common criminal. I swore revenge — and the day did come — Silvia, sainted martyr, was sacrificed. She lived only a year, and died of a broken heart a few days after giving you birth."

This painful thought seemed to have exhausted all his strength. His dim eyes again sought the portrait, and, repeating, "Silvia! Silvia! My martyred Silvia!" he fell heavily back upon the pillows.

They stood spell-bound, listening with wonder and pity to the sad recital: even Father Francesco, accustomed as he was in his long ministry to listen to tales of sin and sorrow, could not help feeling deeply moved. He tenderly bathed his face with scented spirits, and, when

Leone was again restored to consciousness, he said gently, "Go on, my son, go on."

Leone re-opened his eyes, and, fixing them earnestly upon Silvio, who stood awestruck before him, said entreatingly, "You will forgive me, for the love I bore your mother?"

Silvio was so agitated that he could not speak; but his tender heart could not resist the dying man's appeal. He took his hand, and pressed it affectionately in token of assent.

Leone continued, "Two years after, I escaped from prison, joined a band in the Abruzzi, and they made me their leader. I watched my chance. The Duke of Celata was living in his villa in perfect security — he did not know that I had escaped. I attacked it with my band with the fury of revenge. I penetrated into his bedroom — I stabbed him before he could offer any resistance — I raised my arm to murder you also, sleeping beside him — You opened your eyes — they were Silvia's eyes — and I could not strike — but I had sworn that the name of Celata should be extinct; and I stole you away, and intrusted you to Father Francesco. I meant it first as a *vendetta;* but soon

I learned to love you, for you were the image of my Silvia. I came to love you as if you had been indeed my own. Have I not loved you — Silvio?" He grasped his hand, and carried it to his lips. "Will you not now forgive me for the murder of your father?"

Silvio stood stupefied with the many conflicting emotions crowding so suddenly upon his mind. There lay the murderer of his father, but his own savior and benefactor, dying, and praying for pardon. Looking away from Leone, he caught Edith's tearful, appealing gaze, and the venerable Father Francesco's expectant look, awaiting the reply that, to satisfy Leone, must come spontaneously from Silvio himself. He understood them both; and, bending compassionately towards him, he said in a gentle voice, —

"Leone, may God forgive you, as I do, with all my heart, for the death of my father."

A grateful smile irradiated Leone's face: he again lifted Silvio's hand to his lips, kissing it as devoutly as if it had been Silvia's, while Father Francesco asked him earnestly, —

"Leone, do you truly repent that murder?"

Leone fixed his eyes on Father Francesco with a stern look, as if struggling in his own mind, then, turning toward Silvio again, watched him long and earnestly, the hard look gradually softening into the repentant expression which Silvio had transferred to his St. Jerome. He meekly bent his head in sign of assent, saying, "I do."

Then Father Francesco, devoutly raising his hand, said solemnly, "And now, as man has forgiven you, so may God, in his infinite mercy, forgive you also." And he gave him the holy absolution *in articulo mortis.*

A few minutes after, he administered to him the last holy sacraments.

The mental strain and painful emotions Leone had undergone had exhausted his failing strength; and he relapsed into unconsciousness, hovering between life and death. They clustered around him, painfully watching his last agony, while the convent-bell mournfully tolled the knell for one passing away. Edith still sat half-leaning against the bed, and her loosened curls falling upon it; while Father Francesco and Silvio knelt at the other side, reciting the

prayers for the dying, interrupted only by the tramp of the soldiers, who were marching out of the village, carrying away their prisoners.

Leone's breathing grew more difficult, his strong vitality gradually yielding to the effect of the hemorrhage. Suddenly his hand, moving convulsively, rested against Edith's hair. The touch electrified him. He opened his eyes; and, seeing the sweet, tearful face compassionately watching him, a tender smile of satisfaction lighted his countenance, and he said with a dying voice, "You will marry Silvio now, for he is not the son of a brigand. That was what I had meant to tell you." He seized Silvio's hand, pressed it: but his eyes were fixed on the portrait of Silvia; he gasped her name two or three times in the agony of death, and sunk back on the pillow. He was dead.

Father Francesco felt his heart: it had ceased to beat. He placed a crucifix in his hands, and saying, "*Requiescat in pace!*" he knelt with the other monks, and recited the prayers for the dead.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

THREE years had elapsed; and, on a lovely autumn day, a small party were celebrating the birthday of a pretty infant in a villa of Capo di Monte, overlooking the romantically beautiful bay of Naples. They were assembled in a hall that opened upon a terrace, shaded by a natural awning of grape-vines from whose leafy stems hung enormous clusters of ripe grapes. A tall Italian pine, rising near the villa, spread its umbrella-like branches over it, and masses of flowers on the terrace and in the garden beneath scented the air with their delicious perfume. The deep blue of the sea contrasted so harmoniously with the verdure of the country, and the purple haze of the islands of Capri and Ischia, rising like nymphs from the water, that one could easily imagine it the terrestrial paradise sung by the poets. The white lateen-sails

of the fisher-boats skimmed the water like sea-gulls; and the smoke from Vesuvius waved lightly, tinged by the sun's rays, like the feather on a chevalier's hat. It was the fall of the year, but the air was as soft as in summer.

Cheerful voices were heard in the hall: a young man ran out upon the terrace, holding the child astride on his shoulder, and trotting like a horse, followed by a robust nurse, dressed in the costume of a Roman peasant, crying out in alarm, "Stop, stop, Signor Valerio! you will drop the poor baby!"

Valerio, regardless of the nurse's warning, continued to trot over the terrace to the delight of the infant-boy, who screamed with pleasure. The rest of the company came out soon after, — Edith and Silvio, Mr. Norman, and the venerable Father Francesco. As Valerio recrossed the terrace, still pursued by the nurse, Edith, who was also a little uneasy at his prancing, stopped him, saying with a laugh, "There, that's enough. You will kill the poor child!"

"Kill the child! No: he likes it, he enjoys it."

But Edith insisted, took the unwilling child

down from his perch, kissed him affectionately, and handed him back to his nurse.

"You ought to marry, Valerio, you are so fond of children," observed Mr. Norman.

"Marry!" cried Valerio with a merry laugh. "Yes, if you will go to America, and bring back an American girl of a certain type, who may chance to fall in love with me," turning a sly glance upon Edith. "Unless you can do that, I am likely to remain single, I fear. Whom am I to marry here, — a model? Bah! Besides, who would take care of my old parents in Rome? No, no. I am happy enough working away with Silvio, as of old, and amusing his child. — Do I not make a good Yorick for your boy, Signora di Montalba?"

"Oh, you merry, kind-hearted fellow! what should we do without you?" replied Edith with a sweet smile.

"I think I will paint you in the character of Yorick, prancing with my boy on your back. It would make a fine picture," said Silvio.

They soon gathered round Father Francesco; for it was the first time that he had come to visit them in Naples, and they had many things

to speak about. He had settled Silvio's estate: that is, all the money that Leone had left to Silvio he had returned to the Papal Treasury, under the seal of confession, as conscience money, Silvio refusing to touch a single penny of it; his profession was amply sufficient for his support, and Edith was entirely independent. He had retained his mother's name of Di Montalba; for the title of Duke of Celata would have recalled a family crime, and awakened bitter remembrances. Mr. Norman lived with them; and now they expected to see Father Francesco constantly, for he had been appointed, at his own request, prior of a neighboring convent, so as to be near his beloved ward, Silvio.

Mr. Norman was delighted to meet Father Francesco again; and, in the expansion of his generous heart, he said to him, —

"Father Francesco, educated as I was in the Protestant religion, I had a natural suspicion of all Catholic priests; and I must honestly confess, that once or twice I doubted whether you were not a hypocrite, but now I know that you are a saint;" and he shook his hand very cordially, as if apologizing for it.

The good monk blushed like a girl, at this unexpected acknowledgment, and, meekly bowing his head, said humbly, —

"I am only a poor servant of the Lord."

"Well, well! true virtue is always modest. I will only say, that, if all Catholic priests were like you, I think that I would turn Catholic myself."

"Our holy religion is not responsible for its bad servants, and unfortunately there are many such. But come, let me see your beautiful villa," he said, turning to Edith and Silvio, to change the conversation.

They took him all over the house. It was what might have been expected of two artists, both in elegance and taste. Edith's landscapes, and Silvio's best works, with many other choice paintings, hung in every room. Edith's dream had been realized; for in the studio that Silvio had built out from the rear of the villa hung her portrait as a Madonna, with her own baby in her arms. But their bedchamber contained the gems of their collection: over the bed, in the post of honor, hung Silvio's portrait of his mother, and opposite,

his painting of St. Jerome. They all stopped before it, looking up at it with a rush of painful emotion. Father Francesco, lifting his hand, said devoutly, "Peace be to his soul!" for the painting was a picture of St. Jerome, but the face was the face of Leone.

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